

## Public told not to engage in panic buying of face masks



This Jan 27, file pic shows a staff at a pharmacy in Kuala Lumpur, posting a notice, to inform customers that it ran out of face masks. -NSTP/Mohd Yusni Ariffin

By Esther Landau - February 4, 2020 @ 1:15pm

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The public have been reminded not to engage in panic purchasing of face masks amidst the dwindling supply of the item due to the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said such actions would cause uneasiness and tension among the people.

"The ministry has received a lot of complaints regarding the insufficient supply of face masks. Our focus now is to ensure that local suppliers and importers of face mask increase the supply of the item.

"We also want to remind the public not to cause panic buying as that could cause anxiety among the consumers and lead them to purchase the item in large volumes," he said at the launch of the Sub-regional



Meeting of the Intellectual Property Office Officials Responsible for the Madrid System at the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPO) here.

The rising fear among the public over the coronavirus led to a high demand for surgical face masks and hand sanitisers since last month.



**Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail. - NSTP/File pic**

Saifuddin also said that after a meeting held between the ministry, suppliers and importers last week, these local manufacturers and importers have been told to increase their supply.

"At the meeting, we discussed and conducted some fact finding on the sufficiency of face masks supply as well as the price control set on the item. We only discussed the face mask supply issue as it is a crucial item as of now.

"This is the immediate solution we can do now. The face mask supply is from China, Europe, the United States and Singapore.

"Before the outbreak, surgical and industrial mask were needed the most. Almost 90 per cent of the face mask supply in the country was for minor uses. The demand for the item was only high during the haze situation," he added.

Saifuddin reminded retailers not to hike prices of the item as it is under the Price Control and Anti-Profitteering Act 2011. He said the ministry has taken stern action against two errant retailers.

Traders or retailers found to have breached the directive are liable to face fine up to RM100,000 or imprisonment for not more than three years or both or a compound of RM50,000.

Companies found selling the controlled items above the maximum prices set can be fined up to RM500,000 or compounded up to RM250,000, if convicted.