

Ministry to keep close watch on face mask prices and supply

By Azura Abas
February 10, 2020 @ 11:30am



Checks at Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman found visitors wearing face masks as a precautionary measure against coronavirus outbreak. (NSTP/SUPIAN AHMAD)

KUALA LUMPUR: Authorities have inspected 2,103 wholesale and retail premises selling face masks for the past two weeks starting from Jan 25.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the daily checks were done in the wake of increased demand for face masks following the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak.

As of Sunday (Feb 9), he said the ministry's enforcement officers had inspected 2,103 business premises, and out of the total, 17 offences were detected with a compound value of RM57,400 and a seizure worth RM4,255.50.

"Of the 17 offences, 14 were cases of sale above the maximum price and three were cases of no price display.

"I want to emphasise that face mask is a regulated price item under the Price Control (Controlled Prices) Order 2009 and the Price Control (Maximum Pricing) (No.2) Order 2009.

"This means anyone who sells face masks exceeding the gazetted price can be penalised under the Price Control and Anti-Profitteering Act 2011," he said in a statement today.

Saifuddin said the enforcement officers would continue monitoring business premises selling face mask until the 2019-nCoV had been contained and ensure face mask would not be sold beyond the control price or at unreasonable prices.

On this note, he urged consumers to lodge complaints with the ministry via its nine complaint channels, including WhatsApp at 019-2794317, should they come across face masks being sold beyond the control price.

The maximum price of ear loop one layer-type face mask is at RM7 per box containing 100 pieces; two layer-type ear loop face masks at RM10 per box and cost 20 sen each; three layer type head and ear loop is at 80 sen each; three layer type tie-on face mask at 80 sen each and the N95 mask at RM6 each.



Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the ministry's enforcement officers had inspected 2,103 business premises. (NSTP/ROSELA ISMAIL)

Trader or retailer found to have breached the directive is liable to fine up to RM100,000 or maximum three-years' jail, or both, or pay a compound of RM50,000.

On addressing the issue of face mask shortage, Saifuddin said the ministry had held meetings and engaged with relevant manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and retailers to get the actual situation of supply and source of supply of face masks in the country.

"We have also visited face mask factories and talked to the manufacturers on how to increase production beyond the normal output," he said, adding that some of the manufacturers had increased their production in the near future.

"The Ministry will continue working closely with the industry to resolve any challenges and constraints to make sure the supply of face masks in the market can meet consumer demand."

Few days ago, the ministry had advised the public against panic buying of face masks amidst the dwindling supply of the item due to 2019-nCoV outbreak as such actions would cause uneasiness and tension among the people.

Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society president Amrahi Buang was reported as saying that many were unaware that the face masks should only be worn by those handling patients or working to ascertain suspected infection.

For the average person, consistent personal hygiene maintenance such washing hands with soap is sufficient, he added.