

People urged not to engage in panic buying of face masks

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KUALA LUMPUR (Feb 4): Members of the public are advised not to trigger a sudden panic purchasing of face masks in the wake of the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak in China as it could lead to apprehension among people.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the government will ensure a sufficient supply of face masks to meet the high demand for the item currently.

"The government is working with responsible parties to ensure a sufficient supply of face masks in the market, but at the same time, I would like to ask people not to do a panic buying," he told reporters after officiating the meeting of the Intellectual Property Offices of the 20 regional countries on the Madrid System at the Intellectual Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPO) headquarters here today.

Saifuddin Nasution said local manufacturers and importers had been told to increase production and import of face masks during a meeting with the ministry last week.

He said previously, almost 90% of face masks, most of which are imported from China, Europe, the United States and Singapore, were surgical and industrial masks whose usage would only spike during the haze.

At the same time, Saifuddin Nasution also reminded retailers not to increase the prices of face masks, an item under the Price Control and Anti-Profiteering Act 2011, or face stern actions from the ministry.