

'There is no reason to panic'

Lee: Those without flu-like symptoms need not wear masks

IPOH: The public should not start panicking by wearing masks as there is no case of human to human transmission of the novel coronavirus in the country, says Deputy Health Minister Dr Lee Boon Chye.

Those without flu-like symptoms, cough or fever need not wear masks, he said.

"However, those with such symptoms must wear the masks to prevent infecting others, as it is also the influenza season.

"What is more important is to keep washing your hands properly using soap because even wearing a mask is not effective as a form of protection," he told reporters after attending a Chinese New Year event here yesterday.

Dr Lee said that if a mask is not worn properly, there is also a risk of getting flu-like symptoms.

Citing an example, he said if a person has flu symptoms and the hands are not washed properly, using the same hands to wear a mask could cause infection as well.

"If we start telling people to wear masks, then the next panic question will be 'should schools, cinemas, shopping malls and gatherings be closed or cancelled?'," he said.

Dr Lee said that for now, the government wants to prevent the virus from spreading within the community.

In **JOHOR BARU**, State Unity, Domestic Trade and Consumerism Committee chairman Dr S. Ramakrishnan urged the public to file a report with the ministry if they found any unreasonable increase in prices of face masks and hand sanitisers.

"We have yet to receive any complaint of such a price hike. The public should notify the authorities if they come across such a case," he said.

He noted that many shops had run out of the items due to concerns over the coronavirus.

"Face masks and hand sanitisers



Safety first: A trader who only wants to be known as Wee showing face masks sold at his outlet near the Terminal One bus station in Seremban. — Bernama

are not controlled items, so we cannot stop the public from buying in bulk.

"This include Singaporeans and Chinese nationals who reportedly have been making huge purchases of these items here," he added.

He advised the public not to panic and refrain from stocking up on face masks and hand sanitisers.

"I hope that the public would only buy enough for their personal and family use, instead of buying in boxes to stock up," he said.

In KOTA KINABALU, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry's Sabah director Georgie Abas

said face masks are available here, depending on the area.

"We found stocks in most of the shops and pharmacies where my officers went to check on Saturday," he said.

These places are generally the non-tourist areas, he said.

However, Abas acknowledged that the supply at popular areas was low.

He reminded traders to not raise prices of face masks.

He advised consumers to report to the ministry if they knew of any shop that increased the price of face masks.

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Dr Lee Boon Chye

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