

Face mask production to increase up to 400,000 pieces daily



Monday, February 10th, 2020 at , News

Industry players have given the commitment they only need 2 weeks to produce up to 2m pieces of face masks, says minister

by ASILA JALIL/ pic by MUHD AMIN NAHARUL

LOCAL manufacturers have given their commitment to increase the production of three-ply face masks up to 400,000 pieces daily to meet the public's demand amid the 2019 novel coronavirus scare.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said he has met with industry players and assured them that the government will buy the additional production of masks if they can increase the quantities that are manufactured daily, weekly or monthly.

"The ministry has met with several industry players and urged them to increase their daily, weekly or monthly production and assured them that the government will buy every additional face masks produced.

"With that assurance, the amount that they can supply immediately is 400,000 pieces produced daily. For example, if we confirm the purchase today, the production can be increased up to that amount the next day," he told a press conference in Putrajaya last Friday.

Saifuddin Nasution said 90% of the face masks manufactured in the country are surgical masks or for the industry's use, while the public is demanding for three-ply masks which are currently on a limited supply.

He also said industry players have given the commitment they only need two weeks to produce up to two million pieces of face masks.

The masks will be kept in stockpile and the Health Ministry (MoH) will be in charge of the distribution.

Saifuddin Nasution added that there are less than 10 manufacturers involved in the production and the process will commence once KPDNHEP and the Finance Ministry confirm the prices.

"We will have an adequate stock and we urge the public to not go on panic buying because we have discussed with local manufacturers to increase production of these masks.

"They have also given their commitment to increase the production and they will begin after the price and other factors are confirmed," added Saifuddin Nasution.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng, who was at the same press conference, announced that the retail prices of petroleum products would go down from Feb 8 until Feb 14, 2020, based on the prices set by the Automatic Pricing Mechanism.

The retail price of RON97 is down seven sen per litre to RM2.34 from RM2.41, RON95 has dropped four sen to RM2.04 per litre from RM2.08 and diesel price has reduced 10 sen to RM2.08 per litre from RM2.18.

Lim said the reduction in prices is due to the decline in global oil prices.

"The prices for RON95 at RM2.04 per litre and diesel at RM2.08 per litre are a huge decrease from last week when the prices were at RM2.11 for RON95, which was capped at RM2.08 per litre, and RM2.18 per litre for diesel.

"The stabilisation of retail prices for petroleum products benefits the people where when the global price reduces, the retail price of petroleum products will also reduce to ensure users can enjoy the reduction in prices immediately," he said.

He added that the federal government is committed to stabilising the retail price of petroleum products, in line with Pakatan Harapan's manifesto.

Lim said the subsidy for petroleum products and liquified petroleum gas funded by the government totalled to RM6 billion in 2019.