More face masks to be made soon

PUTRAJAYA: The shortage of three-ply face masks will be resolved once local manufacturers start to increase production, with an extra 400,000 pieces daily.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail says the additional production is expected to start soon with a guarantee given to the manufacturers that the government will buy it up.

He said his ministry and the Finance Ministry were finalising the purchase price for the additional pieces of face masks, adding that production would start once this and a few other requests by manufacturers were sorted out.

"With the additional production of face masks, the government will set up stockpiles nationwide to ensure there will always be sufficient supply.

"Once the stockpiles are set up, there will be no issue of shortage because supply will then be stable.

"We would also like to advise the public not to panic buy because stocks will be replenished soon," he told a press conference with Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng here.

> " We want to ... ensure traders do not hike prices of face masks. Those found to be doing this will be dealt with.
>
> **Saifuddin Nasution Ismail** "

To a question, Saifuddin said while the ministry could impose a limit on how many units of face masks and sanitisers a customer could buy, there was no need for such a move yet as the focus was to ensure enough supply.

"The other thing that we want to focus on is to ensure traders do not hike prices of face masks, which is a controlled item. Those found to be doing this will be dealt with," he said.

The price of a three-ply mask is 80 sen while the N95 mask is sold at RM6 per unit.

Saifuddin said 90% of the production by local manufacturers were surgical and industrial masks mainly for export.

On whether the government would distribute free face masks, he said the ministry would wait for advice from the Health Ministry, adding for now it was doing its part to ensure production was increased.

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