

Call for more face masks

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By REMAR NORDIN



Dr Sahrudin (left) with Johor international trade, investment and utilities committee chairman Jimmy Puah Wee Tse (right) during a visit to Kulai.

KULAI: Johor wants manufacturers of face masks to increase production to meet demand brought about by fears over the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak.

State unity, domestic trade and consumer affairs committee chairman Dr S. Ramakrishnan said traders were also advised not to take advantage of the situation and increase prices.

"This is something out of the ordinary and we hope manufacturers can cope with the increasing demand.

"The high demand is driven by fear among the people who only want to protect themselves and their loved ones from contracting the virus.

"Let us all play our part in containing this virus," said Ramakrishnan who was part of the group during Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Sahrudin Jamal's working visit to Kulai district here.

He added that the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry's (KPDNHEP) enforcement unit would be monitoring the situation to ensure no increase in the price of face masks.

"We just hope that all will work together during this anxious time," he said.

KPDNHEP secretary-general Datuk Muez Abd Aziz was reported saying face mask was an item on the price control list, with the ceiling price fixed for the five types of face masks under the Price Control and Anti-Profitteering Act 2011.

He said legal action would be taken against errant traders, with a maximum fine of RM100,000 or imprisonment for up to three years or both if found guilty, while companies could be fined up to RM500,000 or compounded up to RM250,000 if found guilty.

Muez said the prices of face masks or surgical masks varied, depending on the type.

The first three types are with earlobes, with the one-layered sold at RM5 per box at wholesale price. Retail price is RM7 per box.

The other is the two-layered masks, sold at RM8 per box for wholesale and RM10 per box at retail, or 20 sen per piece, he said.

Muez said the third type was the three-layered surgical mask, which was sold at RM25 per box or 80 sen per piece.

The two other types of surgical masks are the three-layered hijab-friendly ones, which cost RM30 per box or 80 sen per piece, and the N95 face mask, which can be bought for RM100 per box or RM6 per piece.

