

PANDEMIC ESSENTIALS

GOVT TO REVIEW PRICE OF FACE MASKS

RM2 price too high considering govt has exempted import duties, says Ismail Sabri

KUALA LUMPUR

THE government will review the ceiling price of face masks, which was increased from 80 sen to RM2 a piece last week.

Senior Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said it was agreed that the ceiling price of RM2 was too high since the government had exempted import duties for face masks.

"The prime minister (Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin) also disagreed with the high price.

"This matter will be discussed in the meeting tomorrow morning (today), which will have the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry relook the prices.

"We will determine if the price can be reduced from the initial price.

"There is no reason for a price hike since the government agreed to abolish import duties for the purchase of face masks.

"We hope to bring down the price" he told a press conference, which was carried live over Radio



A worker putting up a notice to inform the public that face masks are out of stock at a pharmacy in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY MUSTAFA KAMAL

Televisyen Malaysia after a meeting with ministers on the implementation of the Movement Control Order yesterday.

Elaborating on a previous press conference about the same matter, Ismail said the government was in the process of buying 10 million face masks from China to support the demand in Malaysia.

"This is paid for by the government. The National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) is in charge of supplies and distribution. We hope Nadma can expedite the process."

He said the masks would first be distributed to the frontliners managing the pandemic, which

THREE-PLY (ear loop/head loop/head tie-on) face mask (surgical/medical) is to be sold at RM100 per box/RM2 per unit (wholesale price: RM75 per box/RM1.50 per unit); and,

N95 face mask (surgical medical) is to be sold at RM6 per unit (wholesale price: RM100 per box).

In **Kuala Terengganu**, Deputy Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Rosol Wahid said a main supplier had confirmed with the government that one million pieces of face masks would be delivered today.

He said the supplier had been authorised to import face masks from abroad. He also denied that the shortage of face masks was due to hoarding.

He said if there was hoarding, there would be an oversupply of face masks when the government categorised them as a controlled item.

He said only five per cent of the face masks (manufactured in Malaysia) was allocated for the local market, while the rest was exported to countries that produced the masks' raw material.

"The outcome of the meeting with the manufacturers and main producers on Tuesday was that the government had directed them to increase the allocation for the local market to between 20 and 35 per cent.

"Local manufacturers had to export the locally-produced face

masks as they had to adhere to the agreement with the raw material manufacturers.

"Investigations by Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs enforcement personnel found that panic-buying had caused face masks to run out of stock."

Rosol said traders found guilty of increasing the price of face masks could be jailed for up to three years or fined RM100,000, or both.

In **Kepala Batas**, Penang, a restaurant assistant, 35, claimed he was cheated of RM245 from fake face mask sales via Facebook recently.

The victim saw an advertisement for face masks and contacted the seller before making two transactions totalling RM245 for seven boxes containing 350 face masks.

However, after making his payment, he realised he was duped when another Facebook user commented that he had never received any of the face masks he had ordered and that the seller could not be contacted.

Seberang Prai Utara district police chief Assistant Commissioner Noorzainy Mohd Noor confirmed the case.

"Four investigation papers have been opened into similar cases involving a total of RM9,135."

The case is being investigated under Section 420 of the Penal Code for cheating.