

## Unhappy with RM1.50 ceiling price for face masks? Lodge an appeal with MOF, minister advises local businesses

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BY RADZI RAZAK



A sales assistant arranges boxes of face masks at a pharmacy in Setia Alam January 28, 2020. Senior Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob says the ceiling price of RM1.50 a piece for three-ply medical grade face masks takes into consideration import costs as well as consumers' ability to buy the item. — Picture by Miera Zulyana

**KUALA LUMPUR, April 4** — Any local business encountering problems with the government ceiling price for face masks could try lodging an appeal with the Finance Ministry as it handles subsidy matters, said Senior Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

He added that the ceiling price of RM1.50 a piece for three-ply medical grade face masks takes into consideration import costs as well as consumers' ability to buy the item.

“Actually, when we set the ceiling price, we take everything into account. For example, import costs.

“When we import, we already do the calculation of how much it will cost in shops or Malaysia.

“If you want to make an appeal, you can submit it to the Finance Ministry. Subsidy is under them,” he said, reacting to a question from a reporter during a press conference today.

On March 30, the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (MPS) said the government should subsidise the losses suffered by pharmacies from the sudden lowering of the price of three-ply face masks from RM2 to RM1.50, or else it should defer the decision for a month.

Its president Amrahi Buang said MPS was disappointed that the move was taken without any prior notice or consultation with stakeholders.

“We firmly oppose the new price (RM1.50), which will take effect on April 1.

“We request that the government either subsidise the pharmacies that will incur losses or give them a deferment period of one month to clear out their stocks.

“Invoices can be provided with dates of purchase as evidence if required,” he said in a letter dated March 30 addressed to the Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

The letter was also signed by Sarawak Pharmaceutical Society president Susan Tang and Sabah Pharmaceutical Society president Jemima Ho.

It was also forwarded to Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba, National Disaster Management Agency director-general Datuk Mohtar Mohd Abd Rahman and Pharmaceutical Services senior director Datin Faridah Aryani Md. Yusuf.

On March 30, the government reversed its decision on March 20 that the three-ply face mask which is used the most by frontliners in fighting Covid-19 from RM2 to RM1.50.

The price of one-ply face masks is RM0.15 per unit, or RM7 per box; two-ply face masks is RM0.20 per unit, or RM10 per box; and N95 masks is RM6 per unit.