

19 August 2009

PRESS COMMENT

PRICE CONTROL OF FACE MASK

The government is planning to control the price of face mask. What is your comment regarding this issue?

1. What is the reasonable price of face mask to consumers?

The MMA cannot dictate what is the 'reasonable' price of face mask for the public. Bulk purchase of face mask for hospitals and clinic has always been reasonable and subject to competition in the market place. Smaller purchases are almost always more costly but should be reasonable. The Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs may finally decide on this matter.

2. Why is price going up from 50 sen to RM5?

When demand is high, costs will go up – this is basic economics. Some people may be taking advantage of the current pandemic of Influenza A (H1N1) to make more money, but this is human nature. These are those who are willing to make extra profit at expense of people's health and well being.

There are different types of face mask with different quality: the one recommended for us in the context of H1N1 virus protection is the 3-ply surgical mask which normal sells for 50 sen to one ringgit each. The N95 is more costly and may cost upwards of 2-4 ringgit even for clinics, hospitals or doctors, unless bulk purchased by tender.

The government's move to put a ceiling price on face mask is welcomed. That should solve the problem for the consumers. However, there may be constraints as to how much production of these masks may be sufficient, for all the increased demands from the public and health care establishments, such as hospitals and clinics, nation-wide.

3. Is it reasonable for the price to go up 10 times expensive?

Of course not, this is profiteering and unacceptable. We urge members of the public to boycott establishments which sell these items at exorbitant prices. However, the use of face mask is more useful for people with cough and cold symptoms, to help them prevent spread to other people. Of course staying at

home and self-quarantine is preferred, rather than going out and possibly infecting others. The wearing of face mask by everybody is probably not very useful or protective unless someone next to you directly coughs or sneezes into your face. Practice good cough/sneeze etiquette with frequent hand washing and good personal hygiene is best adopted as a practice by everyone.

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