

GLOVE SALES UP DUE TO GLOBAL DEMAND

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PETALING JAYA: It is a case of mixed fortunes with the novel coronavirus outbreak, with certain sectors seeing an increase in sales despite a negative overall impact.

Malaysian Rubber Glove Manufacturers Association president Denis Low said its members have been receiving increased orders from countries making preparations to tackle the outbreak.

“Singapore has just ordered 120 million pieces of gloves despite having only a population of about five million.

“The world is getting very cautious and now many countries are building up a stockpile as a ‘defensive strategy’ in case the virus strikes their country hard, ” he said.

Low added that rubber glove sales were predicted to grow by about 20% to 25%, more than the 17% increase during the Influenza A (H1N1) outbreak in 2009.

He also urged feeder industry players such as latex and chemical suppliers to ramp up production as well to match efforts by the glove makers.

Analysts have estimated that glove manufacturers could see an average 14% boost in their revenues for the year 2020, based on an assumption that global demand for gloves would see a rise of 8% to 9%.

Malaysia is the world's largest glove producer.

Top Glove Corporation Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Dr Lim Wee Chai said the total orders from China over the past week was more than double their usual sales to the country.

He said they were expecting more orders depending on the severity of the outbreak and how long it would last.

“We have been in the industry for nearly 30 years and have experienced several spikes in demand for gloves during epidemics such as H1N1 in 2009, SARS in 2002 and MERS in 2012.

“The utilisation rate for our production capacity is at 85% and we are able to ramp it up to 95% or 100% when the need arises. We have sufficient raw materials and manpower, and our plants are also highly automated and digitalised, ” he added.

Lim said Top Glove had also pledged to donate three million gloves to hospitals in Wuhan.

Malaysia has committed to donating 18 million pieces of medical gloves to China to assist in the battle against the outbreak.