

MMA highlights security concerns after man sets himself on fire

By **FMT Reporters** - September 8, 2018 11:59 AM



The room in the urology unit of the hospital in Penang where a man poured petrol over himself and a doctor before setting it on fire. (Bernama pic)

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) today condemned the recent incident at a private hospital in Penang where a man who was believed to be mentally unstable poured petrol over himself and a doctor before setting it on fire.

MMA president Dr Mohamed Namazie Ibrahim said healthcare professionals were becoming increasingly subject to abuse, whether in verbal or physical form.

"Despite adequate notices and reminders to the public that abuse against healthcare workers will not be tolerated, incidents like this keep recurring.

"It is truly deplorable that such an incident could have occurred to a doctor and his staff who were in the midst of carrying out their duties at the clinic," he said in a statement today.

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Aside from the man and the doctor, three nurses and a patient were also injured in the incident.

The man was detained by the police and given treatment for mental illness at the Penang Hospital. On Sept 5, he was remanded for seven days to assist in investigations.

Namazie said incidents in which doctors at general practice clinics were attacked, sometimes fatally, should be investigated as well.

"The general practice clinics outside hospitals are particularly vulnerable as the security at such facilities is lax," he said.

Even with the availability of security measures such as guards and CCTV cameras, he added, the possibility of abuse against healthcare professionals is very real.

"It's not completely unexpected as the hospital is indeed a stressful place not only for healthcare professionals, but for other caregivers as well.

"It is only via effective communication between all parties involved that misunderstandings can be minimised."

He also voiced hope that security services at hospitals would be adequate to prevent any untoward incidents, especially involving patients who are brought in under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

As for those who suffered from mental disorders, he said, it was important for people who were able to identify such issues, to send them to professionals for appropriate treatment.

"This is one area where family physicians or general practitioners who are part of the community will be able to help identify and manage certain individuals who are prone to mental health issues."

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