

# MoH's top brass don't like doctors speaking out against healthcare system, says group as bullying issue resurfaces

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BY R. LOHESWAR



Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Koh Kar Chai speaks to the media during a press conference in Kuala Lumpur May 10, 2022. — Picture by Shafwan Zaidon

**KUALA LUMPUR, May 10** — Some of the Ministry of Health's (MoH) top officials do not like doctors complaining publicly about the healthcare system and the way it is run, the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) said today.

The president of the umbrella body for doctors here, Dr Koh Kar Chai, pointed at the culture of fear as being among reasons junior doctors have refused to escalate their complaints of bullying and abuse.

"This culture of fear within the system, part of it is due to the top brass in MoH," Dr Koh said during a press conference here.

Dr Koh said he was not accusing any specific person, but said that it is known that when medical officers air their grouses to the public, they would be reprimanded.

“This is something we really need to look at. Junior doctors are also vulnerable as when they’re facing these senior officers they feel that if they take the wrong step and complain about the wrong person, even consultants, they will be reprimanded.

“I think that part of this should change. MoH officers are aware of this and are trying to find ways to overcome this. At least a lot of things MMA brought up are being recognised by MoH,” he added.

*Malay Mail* is seeking the ministry’s comments on this accusation.

Dr Koh was commenting on the recent death of a junior doctor from Penang Hospital, which is being investigated as sudden death.

The death has sparked a national discourse on the treatment of junior doctors with revelations of severe bullying, overworking, sexual abuse and harassment in the workplace.

Some doctors have since taken to social media to air their grievances and experiences, but some have accused detractors of having an agenda to attack the healthcare system.

Dr Koh also said today there is a high level of stress when it comes to working in the public healthcare system in Malaysia, suggesting screening for potential medical officers or students in the future.

He admitted that this may cause backlash from parents who wish their children to become doctors, but claimed the reality is not everyone can handle the pressure of the job.

He also said the ministry must look into all contributing factors to address the issues faced by house officers during training and also the welfare of medical officers in the public healthcare system.

“This isn’t just about the housemen alone but about the huge mental burden placed on the shoulders of all doctors,” Dr Koh said.