

Firemen at higher risk of ill health - Nation | The Star Online



KUALA LUMPUR: Spending 10 to 11 hours a day at burning peat swamps and forest reserves to put out fires exposes the firemen to various health risks, say medical experts.

Although not many medical studies were conducted specifically on the profession, a doctor said there could be higher incidences of cancer among older firemen.

“Because of the burning of different materials, they can be exposed to different kinds of carcinogens,” Medical Practitioners Coalition Association of Malaysia vice-president Dr Raj Kumar Maharajah said.

Dr Raj said that while firemen had breathing apparatus, there were some who put their health at risk by smoking cigarettes.

“With the heatwave going on right now, they are also at risk of heat stroke and burns from the fire,” he said.

Dr Raj added that these would put a strain on their bodies, besides their stress levels.

With fires breaking out across the country every day for the past month, largely because of the hot weather, the firefighters have had little choice but to face these dangers head-on.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Ashok Zachariah Philip admitted that he had not worked on cases involving firemen, but said their protective equipment helped mitigate immediate risks.

“As long as firemen use the breathing apparatus provided, they should not get smoke inhalation problems.

“Of course, they are vulnerable to heat exhaustion and danger from fire,” he added.

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