Bogus Kangaroo Courts must be placed under the scanner, says IMA

- Such self-proclaimed justice mongers are unwanted and destructive
- Stringent action and central law are need of the hour

New Delhi, 13 June 2017: According to an estimate by the Indian Medical Association (IMA), over 75% of doctors across the country have faced violence in some form or the other. About 18 states across the country have laws in place to address this issue. However, doctors still continue to face the wrath of patients' kin due to inefficient implementation of these laws. A compilation of videos by IMA has shown that these attacks resemble Kangaroo courts, where when one person starts the act and the others present, whether linked to the original attacker or not, join him in ransacking the area.

Kangaroo courts can be equated to attacks that are mindless and where everyone joins the mob without knowing the facts. Until now, such attacks were commonplace only against thieves, eve teasers, and the like. Attacks against doctors were unheard of and need to be taken seriously. Atrocities against medical professionals are on the rise and it is high time that the nobility and integrity of this profession is upheld.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "Any act of violence against doctors should be made a punishable, non-bailable offence with imprisonment of up to 14 years. At IMA, we are working on analyzing the violent attacks against doctors. Such kangaroo courts try to behave like unofficial, on-the-spot judicial tribunal or assembly that ignores recognized standards of law or justice. They give the impression of a fair legal process but in fact offer no impartial justice as the verdict, invariably to the detriment of the accused, has been decided in advance. The mindset of a violent mob is different. Being part of a group can destroy people's inhibitions, making them do things they'd never otherwise do. They lose their individual values and principles and adopt the group's principles, which, during a riot, are usually to cause destruction and avoid detection."

As per a nationwide study conducted earlier by IMA, doctors face maximum violence while providing emergency services, with as many as 48.8% of such incidents reported from intensive care units (ICUs) or postoperative wards. Often shown in movies, such attacks are invariably accompanied by the arrival of helpless police with usual excuses and answers.
Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "Anyone and everyone indulging in such an act should be booked as they carry equal punishment. An all-out effort should be made by hospital authorities in recognizing these acts of violence and take precautions accordingly. Hospitals should be declared safe zones and people should not be allowed to gather outside critical areas. The sitting area for relatives should be far away from the critical area and the dead body should never be shifted in front of the family."

In critical areas, the nature of duty of doctors is very sensitive where they look after the ill and seriously ill patients. Any acts of violence in and around these areas can endanger multiple lives. A stringent central law is the only answer to such unwanted kangaroo courts. Every critical area in the hospital must have voice-activated CCTV camera and an adequate doctor-to-patient ratio. The need of the hour is also a change in the government policy of allowing only four minutes per patient.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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