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Odisha has 2000 vacancies of doctors

BHUBANESWAR: Angry at the recent spate of attacks from relatives of patients and the state's inability to address their security concern, government doctors on Saturday threatened to resign en masse on September 1 unless a foolproof mechanism is put in place for their safety.

The doctors hardened their stance in the wake of twin attacks, at Balasore on Friday and Puri on Wednesday, by patients' kin. Nirakar Bhatta, president, Odisha Medical Services Association (OMSA) said though the government had enacted a law in 2009 to ensure doctors' safety, the same was not being implemented properly. "We don't want to inconvenience patients. But our step is for betterment of not only doctors but the entire society. We want a better healthcare system," Bhatta told TOI.

According to the Orissa Medicare Service Persons and Medicare Service Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage to Property) Act, 2008, which was implemented on February 2009, violence against healthcare personnel and damage to property is a non-bailable offence with up to three years in prison and Rs 50,000 fine.

The act also stipulates that the cost of damage to the property can be recovered from the offenders. Stating that police hardly use provisions of this act, Bhatta said the government must instruct the police to use it on those targeting healthcare professionals.

In an effort to placate the doctors, director general of police K B Singh on Saturday said he will ensure police patrolling in hospitals on a daily basis. He also announced plans to install CCTV cameras in sensitive hospitals.

Welcoming a letter written by health secretary Arti Ahuja on Friday to home secretary Asit Mohanty seeking police outposts in all district and sub-divisional hospitals, Bhatta said "the matter must not end with the letter. The police must open the outposts at the earliest."

The OMSA president said other demands of the association include opening of casualty wards to tackle emergency patients in all district and sub-divisional hospitals, filling up vacant positions, assuring career progression to attract talent and retaining them. Of the nearly 4800 positions for government doctors in the state, around 2000 are lying vacant.

"Earlier this month we had a discussion with the station mission director of National Health Mission. The NHM had assured us it will help fulfil the demands by August 31. That is why we have given time till this month end before putting in our papers," Bhatta said.

OMSA has been pressing for dynamic assured career progression (DACP), which standing committee on health, Odisha, had recommended in 2013. Under the scheme, each doctor is assured of at least four promotions in his/her career.

Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra have implemented such assured promotion policy for medicos.