

Taxi driver sets himself on fire outside Chen hearing

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A 51-year-old cab driver set himself on fire outside the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) building yesterday.

At about 3:30pm yesterday, Chen Pao-kuo drove his taxi to the front of the MOJ building.

A security guard who had been at the front door thought the driver was dropping someone off, but when he went to open the car door, he discovered that the driver had poured liquid on himself and set himself on fire, police officers said.

Because Chen's car had caught fire as well, he jumped out of his car, screaming and crying and rolling on the ground.

The guard used a fire extinguisher to douse the flames on the burning man before extinguishing the fire in the car.

By the time the fire had been put out, the man's clothes had burned almost completely off, with layers of burnt skin hanging off as well. He suffered second-degree burns to 80 percent of his body, police said.

He was taken by ambulance to National Taiwan University Hospital where he remained in critical condition at press time.

An initial search of Chen's car found a 3 liter gasoline container, which had about 1 liter of gas left after the incident. Chen left no message, police said.

"We have contacted his family and they said they have no idea why he would do such a thing," said Lai Cheng-kuan, deputy director of the Taipei City Police Department's Zhongzheng First Police District.

Lai said Chen Pao-kuo had spent 10 years and three months in jail for manslaughter, and his family said he had been paranoid and depressed ever since he got out of jail last month.

Because the MOJ building is connected to the Taipei District Court, where former president Chen Shui-bian's detention hearing had been held in the morning, the police asked Chen Pao-kuo's family about his political views in an effort to determine his motives.

However, Chen Pao-kuo's older sister said her brother did not have any particular political leanings or attend political events, Lai said.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/07/11](#)