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Arson suspected in Muar surau fires

• By Lee Shi-lan and
Cnong Chee Seong
news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: The arson attempts at two surau in Johor will be investigated with the same vigour as the incidents at churches.

This was the assurance given by the Deputy Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar after receiving reports of the latest incidents in Johor yesterday.

"I urge the public to remain calm and trust the police to carry out their duties impartially and without fear," he said, adding that the arson attempts were the work of irresponsible individuals.

He also urged the public not to take the law into their hands as police would come down hard on those who threaten internal security and public order.

"We will investigate these attempts just as thoroughly as

we did in the church incidents, which led to the arrest of eight suspects," he said, commenting on the arrests of those allegedly linked to the arson incident at the Metro Tabernacle Church in Desa Melawati.

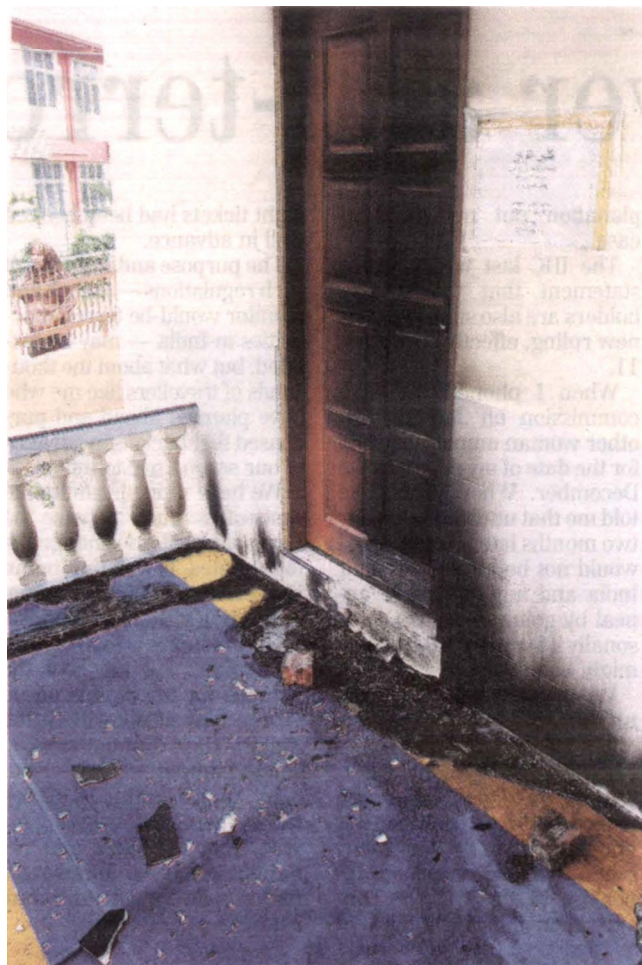
In Johor yesterday, vandals struck at two surau, barely a kilometre apart in Muar.

A two-metre-long curtain at the Siratul Rahim surau at Jalan Ismail here was burnt while a glass window pane was damaged when the vandals splashed kerosene and set the place on fire at 2.30pm.

In the second case, the door, carpet and curtain of the Parit Beting surau were set ablaze while a glass window pane was found damaged.

Johor deputy police chief Datuk Jalaluddin Abdul Rahman said both cases would be investigated for causing mischief by fire.

"We are trying to ascertain whether both cases were com-



The damaged area at the Parit Beting surau in Muar.

mitted by the same culprits," he said, adding that those with information should assist police in the investigations.

Police received the first report at 3.54am from a complainant who claimed to have spotted the fire as he was going out for supper with two friends. He and his friends managed to put out the fire before it spread.

Jalaluddin said initial investigations showed that

kerosene was thrown into the surau through a window before it was set ablaze.

In the second incident, a religious teacher went to the Parit Beting surau and found burn marks on the door, carpet and curtain. A window pane was also broken.

Jalaluddin said police found a bottle and the brick at the scene. It is not known when the fire started and how it was put out.