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Leaders leave happily, without talking a deadline

By Mizan Ali and Reaz Ahmad

The four opposition party chiefs said that outcome of the first ever summit talks held yesterday would bring about the fall of the 'oppressive' government.

They however did not say whether they were setting a deadline.

Emerging out of the close-door meeting, the four opposition leaders of the BNP-led alliance told waiting newsmen of their firm unity to dislodge the three-and-a-half-year-old Awami League government.

All the four including BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia were cautious about giving reactions to the press as their aides pushed the newsmen away.

"We'll establish a pro-people nationalist government ousting the oppressive one," Khaleda Zia said as she rushed to her Toyota Land Cruiser evading questions on how long she would take to dislodge the government.

Party activists and security

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Summit brings Khaleda, Ershad together after 17 yrs

Four chiefs hint at coalition govt

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi and Rezaul Karim

Four opposition chiefs have indicated a coalition government in future, but stopped short of making a formal announcement.

The four leaders, at their much-vaunted summit meeting yesterday evening, however belied speculations about an electoral alliance.

They promised to scrap Special Powers Act and free the state-run electronic media when they came to power in an outline of their future government they hope to form very soon.

"The collective efforts of our four parties are to form as soon as possible a strong, patriotic government on a broad-based consensus to face the challenges of the twenty-first century," said the declaration, released after a four-hour-long meeting.

BNP chairperson Khaleda

Zia hosted the meeting, attended by Jatiya Party chief H M Ershad, Jamaat supremo Golam Azam and Islami Oikya Jote chief Azizul Huq, at her Minto Road official residence.

Hundreds of leaders and activists waited outside the red-brick building as the four leaders sat with their top aides. The leaders also posed for photo.

They signed the four-page declaration in presence of secretaries general and leaders of the alliance liaison committee.

Two other notable participants were BNP standing committee members A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury and M Saifur Rahman.

Their secretaries general and liaison leaders came out to address a press conference when BNP's Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan read out the declaration.

The phone conversation was

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They did not take questions from reporters, housed under a huge canopy erected for the occasion.

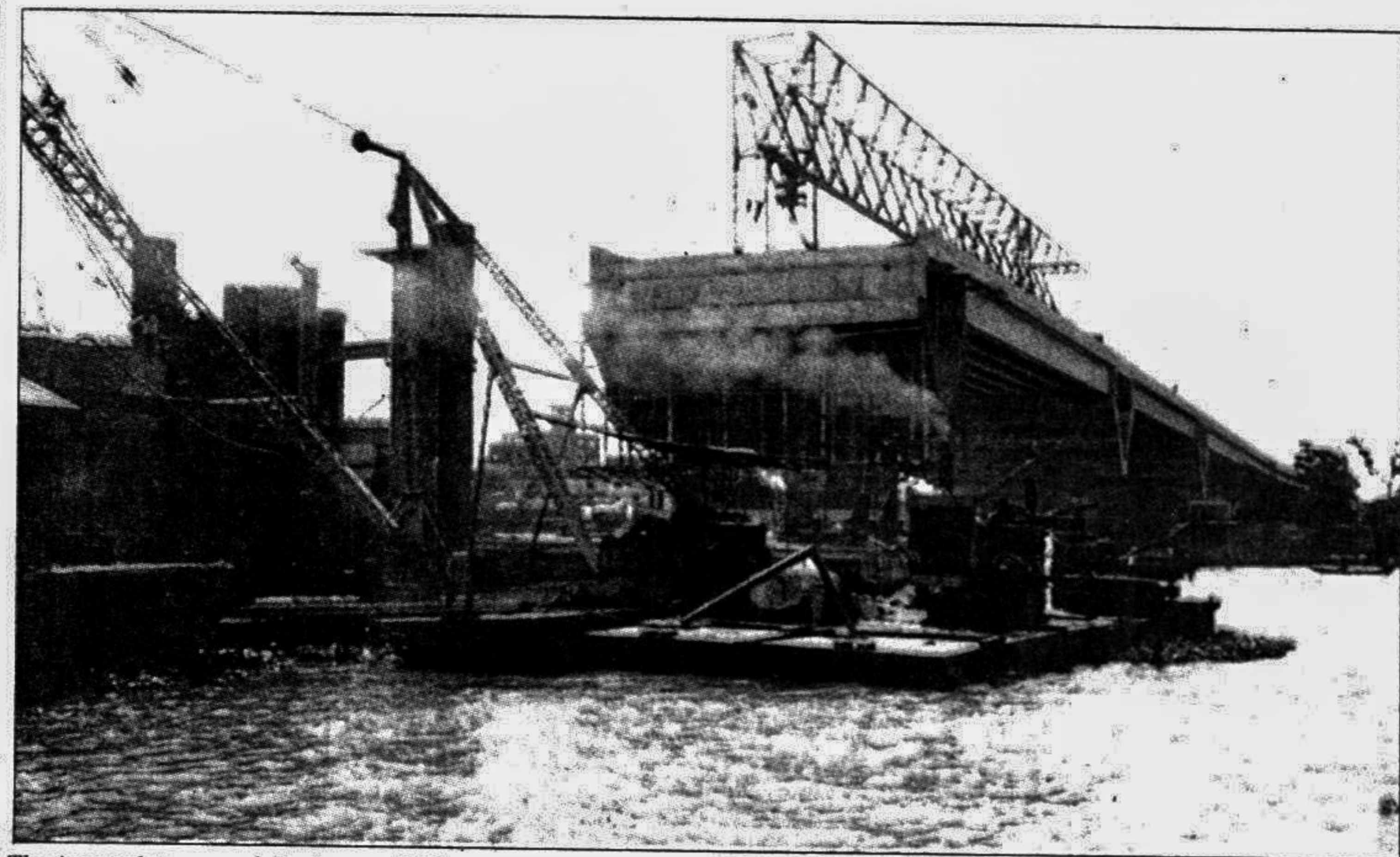
The four then met exclusively among themselves.

The IOJ chief was late by half an hour for the 6pm meeting, pursued for long 11 months by the Ershad-led faction of the JP since they agreed to form a campaign alliance on January 6 this year. During the wait, Khaleda and Ershad had a long chat sitting side by side.

The meeting brought the two together after 17 years. The last time they spoke to each other was when Ershad phoned her on January 4 this year failing to attend her *Iftar* party a week earlier.

The phone conversation was

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The incomplete second Buriganga Bridge.

— Star photo by Morshed Ali Khan

Only four together

By Staff Correspondent

Top leaders of the four-party opposition alliance had exclusive talks last night after their meeting attended by key aides.

Before BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia sat close-door with Jatiya Party Chairman H M Ershad, Jamaat Ameer Golam Azam and IOJ chief Azizul Huq at 7:50 pm at her Minto Road residence, they held a meeting which was attended by senior leaders of the parties including members of the Liaison Committee.

Secretaries general of the four parties -- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan of BNP, Nazim Rahman Manju of JP, Motiur Rahman Nizami of Jamaat and Fazlul Haq Aminu of IOJ -- attended the meeting. Two standing committee members of BNP -- Dr AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and M Saifur

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Taka devalued by 3 per cent

Star Report

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday devalued taka by over three per cent, making dollar costlier by Tk 1.50.

The devaluation, second during the current financial year, is the highest since 1975 when it was devalued by 58 per cent.

The central bank's buying rate of dollar has been fixed at Tk 50.85 and selling rate at Tk 51.15. The mid-rate is now Tk 51, official sources said.

When the Awami League government came to power in 1996, the official buying rate of dollar was Tk 41.75. Since then, taka was devalued 16 times.

"We had been closely watching taka value. For the last few weeks, our currency was overvalued by four to five per cent," Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr M Faruquddin said while talking to *The Daily Star*.

"On the other hand, we have to remain competitive in the international market. Our major competitors devalued their currency to a large extent over the

last three to four years."

According to figures available, India devalued its currency by 17.18 per cent over the last four years, Pakistan by 32.33 per cent, Thailand by 34.52 per cent, and Indonesia by 67 per cent. With yesterday's downward adjustment, taka has been devalued by 20 per cent over the same period.

The government said the country needs to boost its export and at the same time go for diversification. Last year, the trade gap was 2.7 billion dollars with imports worth 8 billion dollars and exports worth 5.3 billion dollars.

"We need to keep our product pricing right if we have to bridge this gap," the governor said. He, however, agreed that pricing alone can't boost exports. Improvement in quality of products and law and order are also cardinal factors.

Dr Faruquddin also hoped that the new round of devaluation

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Golden Pegasus for Prof Yunus

The Regional Government of Tuscany, Italy, has decided to confer the Golden Pegasus 1999 on Prof Muhammad Yunus who earned fame through his microfinance innovations, reports UNB.

The Pegasus is the highest recognition that the Region of Tuscany awards to personalities and institutions for important services given to the international community.

Its record includes the

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Imported rice: Unloading starts after 8 months!

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Nov 30: Unloading of 8,325 tonnes of rice imported from India by the government began on Sunday after eight months.

MV Bishwa Kumudi arrived at Mongla Port on March 31 this year with the rice imported by the Ministry of Food.

But the imported rice could not be unloaded as it was found unfit for human consumption after test conducted by the Food Ministry.

Later, both importer and exporter exchanged many letters regarding the rotten rice.

Several meetings were held between the Divisional Food unloading committee and the Food Ministry on what is to be done with the rotten rice sent by the Indian exporter.

Later, it was decided to unload the entire rice and then sort out the rotten ones.

It was further decided that the Food department would accept the good rice and reject

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Faulty soil test delays second Buriganga bridge

By Morshed Ali Khan

A faulty soil test is delaying construction of the second Buriganga bridge to be completed within three months, an official of the firm said.

The original soil test was conducted by Solitec, a leading firm.

The company has requested the government to extend the project deadline to June 2000. Engineers said they were waiting for the caisson to sink another nine metres into the bed of the river. The caisson sank about 21 metres in the last two and half years.

About half a million people commute across that section of Buriganga river every day.

The bridge would cost Tk 57.32 crore. The entire project involves an expenditure of Tk 148 crore which includes costs for land acquisition on both sides of the bridge and connecting Maa Road and Keraniganj Doha Road with the old part of the city.

Official sources said about 87 per cent work of the project

know the accurate soil condition earlier. "If the base sinks, the bridge can be completed within three months", an official of the firm said.

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Official sources said about 87 per cent work of the project

has been completed but they will have to wait for an "indefinite period for the final caisson to sink".

Sources said, condition of the soil is so "stiff that on an average, each of the four completed caissons took three years to sink. This is causing heavy loss to the firm that accepted the bridge project at a much lesser cost than that of the China-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge downstream, the sources claimed.

The 42-month project was initially scheduled to be completed in February 1998, but the time was extended to April 1999 as the authorities stopped construction work to relocate the ferry service and utility services' lines passing through the area.

Roads and Highways officials alleged that the Engineers Ltd. did not perform its own soil tests, which was mandatory under the contract.

When asked to comment on

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IOJ unhappy

Islami Oikya Jote led by Shaikhul Hadit Azizul Huq appeared unhappy as some of its demands for upholding the spirit of Islam were not incorporated in the joint declaration of the four-party opposition summit, reports UNB.

The antipathy was evident in that IOJ chairman Shaikhul Hadit Azizul Huq arrived at 29 Minto Road about 35 minutes behind schedule to join behind-the-closed-door summit due to start at 6pm.

"It was almost uncertain whether the IOJ chief would attend the summit. We had to reconsider whether we should join or not since our points were not incorporated in the declaration. So, we were late," a top leader of IOJ told UNB last night.

Asking not to be named, the leader said: "Earlier today, we took the decision that the IOJ chief would be represented by a senior party leader at the summit to register our discontent."

After learning that Shaikhul Hadit might not attend the summit, the full liaison committee team representing leaders of BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami met the IOJ chief at 2:30 pm yesterday. They stayed for one hour and finally convinced him to attend the summit.

After the summit, the IOJ leaders were in a meeting till 10 pm to review the outcome of the summit.

Mahathir's coalition wins over two-thirds majority

Malaysian ruling party wins vote

Final results of Monday's parliamentary election

Party	Seats
Parti Islam SeMalaysia	148
Democratic Action Party	27
Keadilan	10
Parti Bersatu Sabah	5
Parti Reformasi Negeri Sarawak	1
Independents	3
Total	193 seats

Outgoing parliament: 193 seats

Party	Seats
Parti Islam SeMalaysia	8
Democratic Action Party	7
Parti Bersatu Sabah	3
Parti Reformasi Negeri Sarawak	1
Independents	3
Total	192 seats*

* 11 vacancy

166 National Front

(14-party coalition led by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad)

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 30: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad today celebrated an emphatic policy victory which secured his legacy as Asia's longest-serving elected leader but also saw big gains by an Islamic opposition, reports AFP.

Despite predictions of a major backlash over the Anwar Ibrahim affair, Mahathir's National Front coalition won 148 of the 193 parliamentary seats and kept power in nine of 11 state assemblies. The coalition secured more than two-thirds majority.

The Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) and not the secular opposition parties proved the biggest winner from the issue of ex-deputy premier Anwar, whose sacking and treatment last year divided the sympathies of ethnic Malays.

PAS more than tripled its parliamentary seats to 27, kept control of Kelantan state assembly in the northern Malay heartland and captured neighbouring Terengganu.

Biggest loser was the Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP), which in its leader's words had been for three decades "the outspoken,

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Another accused in truck driver murder case arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested another FIR-named accused in the case filed in connection with the incident of hurling a petrol bomb on a truck in the city on November 25 that resulted in death of its driver and a helper, police said.

SI Mahabub of Motijheel thana filed a murder case in this connection accusing BNP leader and former DCC Mayor Mirza Abbas and his brother Mirza Khokon, a DCC ward commissioner, and about 90 others.

Police identified the arrested as Nahid, 22. He was arrested from the city's Kamalapur area yesterday morning.

With the arrest of Nahid, police have so far arrested three persons for their alleged involvement in the incident.

Police yesterday produced Nahid before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court and prayed for a seven-day remand.

Truck driver Nasu Mian, 30, was burnt alive when a petrol bomb was hurled on the truck at 5:30 pm during the hartal hours of November 25. Two of his helpers — Zakir and Babul — were seriously injured in the incident. Zakir succumbed to turn injuries on Sunday.

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Prayer Timings

December 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:15	5:45
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	3:42	4:00
Maghrib	5:18	5:23
Esha	7:00	7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Khalid Murder Case Shikdar, 27 others chargesheeted

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Nov 30: Chargesheet in the sensational Khalid Murder Case was submitted to the Court of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate here today accusing 28 people including Ershad Shikdar. Shikdar is the main accused in the murder case.

Jubo League leader Khalid Hossain was the last victim of murders committed by Ershad and his armed cadres during last 20 years in his illegally occupied railway colony areas and at Skid Ghat under Kotwali thana. Of the 28 accused, 19 are now in jail *hajat* while the rest are absconding.

The car and motorbikes were recovered from the riverbed by

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30 specialists for 35000 kidney patients

By Staff Correspondent

Over eight million Bangladeshis suffer from kidney problems annually, an epidemic overwhelming the nation's specialists and treatment facilities, says the vice-chancellor of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

"It is therefore very important to increase the number of specialists and trained manpower in order to disseminate treatment and management of various speciality based medicine," said Prof. MA Quader during his opening address to the Bangladesh Renal Association's 8th National Convention yesterday.

Over 210 kidney specialists and trainees attended the convention, which featured guest

speakers from the USA, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Thailand, India and Pakistan. The International Society of Nephrology sponsored the two-day event.

Doctors estimate 35,000 patients suffer from kidney failure annually. However, there are only 30 kidney specialists in the country, which means few receive the treatment they need to live healthy, productive lives.

Habibur Rahman, secretary general of the Bangladesh Renal Association, said urinary tract infections, kidney stone, painful inflammations and kidney failure is common in the country, but since most pa-

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- Kings Fashion (Bishal Center)
- Big Bite (Hatirpool)
- Coopers (Bijoy Shoron)
- Pizza Howdi (Old Airport)
- Sausy's (Dhanmondi & Gulshan)
- Rush (Houchak)
- Wimpy (Gulshan)
- Cafe Taj (Moghbarar)
- Sky Lark (Baily Road)
- Stop n Shop (Dhanmondi)
- American Fried Chicken (Gulshan)
- Caravan Foods (Bijoy Nagar)
- Hotel Al-Razzaq (Bangshal)
- Hot Hut (Shobhanbag & Uttara)
- Dash/Rajmoni (Ishak & Eastern Plaza)
- Sajna (Gulshan & Dhanmondi)
- Gharoa Hotel (Motijheel)
- Niloy General Store (Chashara)
- Film Fair (Dhanmondi)
- Ahmed Burger (Laxmibazar)
- Pizza Garden (TMC Building)
- Pizza House (Hatkhola)
- Prince Restaurant (Bangabandhu Stadium)
- Patisserie (Elephant Road, Dhanmondi, Gulshan & Motijheel)
- Malancha (Shahbag)
- Khan Bakery (Mirpur-1)
- Prince Corner (Tikatoly)
- Anjum Kabab (Airport Road)
- Prantar (Uttara)
- Dominous Pizza (Mohakhali)
- Don't Miss It (Wari)
- Bangladesh Army Stadium

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