relative donors. The US, like any other developed country, only allows living relative donor of certain organs and cadeveric donors. No sell or purchase of organ is permitted by law.

All of those 1705 living donations in the first three months of 2006 came from family members -- may be the loving sister, may be brother, may be the child, or may be one of the parents.

This is the scenario on one side of the world.

Now let's see what happens on the other, less fortunate, side. In Bangladesh and many other countries with similar socio-economic status, we claim that we have better family values than the west. The ground reality does not corroborate with our claims. Let me give a few examples.

Not too long ago I received this chain mail requesting financial donation for a university student:

Our friend X who lives in Canada lost both of his kidneys about two years ago. He is doing dialysis three times a week. There is a long waiting list (10 to 15 years waiting) in Canada for kidney transplantation since people here do not sell organs. He found somebody in Bangladesh who is willing to sell one of his kidneys. He needs to go to Madras with that person to do the transplantation. The whole process including recovery and rest will probably take three months and will cost around US$25,000. He does not have that much money.

I replied that the Buet student can live a meaningful functional life thanks to free hemodialysis and the Canadian healthcare system. But if I have to donate money, I'll donate to that seller who is compelled to sell an organ out of poverty. And if Canadians or Americans donate their organs for their family members, why can't we?

Another example -- a friend called from Chennai, India to inform me that his elderly mother-in-law had just passed away. She received kidney



transplantation the previous week and had been critically ill since then. The young girl, the kidney donor, who was selected from a group of dozens of interested matched kidney seller, was doing fine.

If you happen to travel to the Chennai hospital district, you will face these repeating obscene events -- dozens of elderly out of shape men and women, accompanied by young healthy men/women. The poor youth will sell their kidney and the older rich will buy it. One's goal is freedom from disease and the other's is freedom from poverty.

Even most of us, the educated part of the society, are not ready to donate part of our body for the loved one. We would rather buy a kidney from someone else's son, daughter, brother or sister.

We probably won't be able to stop organ trade. But the question comes up: why? We pride ourselves on our family values, but is this what we call the world's best family value?

Shouldn't we stop a 19-year-old poor person selling his or her kidney to a 70-year-old rich person? I strongly feel there should be an age barrier in organ transplantation in Bangladesh. I know some Indian hospitals have an age limit, but do we have that in Bangladesh?

The government at least should warrant life long treatment expenses of seller by the buyer's family. There should definitely be a legal umbrella for the organ sellers.

And, by the way, to whom should we address our concerns? If there is to be an organ transplantation regulatory body in Bangladesh, which ministry will oversee it -- health or commerce?

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