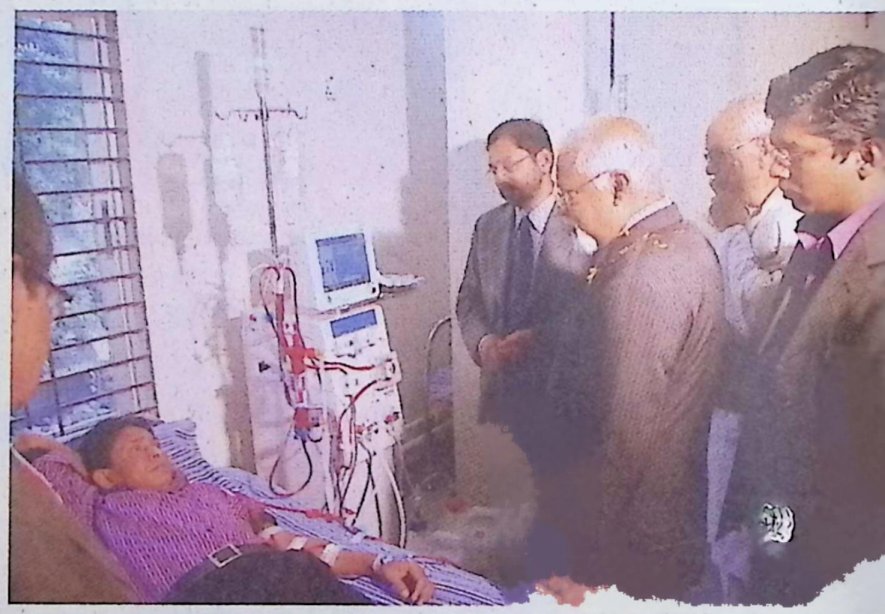
TRUTH ABOUT KIDNEYS

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The kidney is an organ that is often not given the importance it deserves. In Bangladesh, a large part of the population is unaware that two such organs exist inside of us, and among those who do know of their existence, many are unaware of the vital role they play in keeping us alive.

The kidneys have a number of essential biological roles. The primary function of this organ is to remove excess water and toxins from our blood. They also help control blood pressure, produce red blood cells and keep our bones healthy. Our kidneys are located in the middle of our backs, above the waist, on either side of our spines. They help control levels of many minerals and molecules in our blood such as sodium and potassium in order to control the acidity in our blood stream. Every year millions of people die prematurely of complications related to the kidney.

Since many remain in the dark about the importance of kidneys, an awareness campaign was started in Bangladesh in 2006, to spread information to the rural population and provide free treatment. The campaign, organised by the Bangladesh Renal Association, Kidney Foundation, Bangladesh Transplant Association and the Kidney Awareness Monitoring and Prevention Society (KAMPS) has celebrated World Kidney Day every year since then, striving to make each year's work count towards saving lives.



Basic knowledge could make a huge impact in preventing kidney damage.

Dr M A Samad, the founder chairman of KAMPS, has worked tirelessly on this campaign since the very beginning. "Our main target is to develop awareness. If we can inform people that kidney disease is quite common and can be life threatening, we can possibly identify the disease in its early stages and prevent kidney failure," he says.

At the beginning of each year, KAMPS sets up free medical camps in several rural areas of Bangladesh. This year, they started in January and have organised three, day-long medical camps in Bhaluka, Bashail and Talimghar. "On 21 February at Talimghar, the medical camp provided treatment to 5000 people who live below the poverty line," says Samad. "We also checked these patients for heart disease and did gynecology tests for them. You would be surprised to see how many people turn up asking for help" he adds.

Machines were brought from the city for blood tests, urine tests and ultra sonograms, and medicine was prescribed and distributed among the patients at these camps. "We set up big tents with 28 sections, one for each doctor. We also used large generators to help operate our machinery," says Samad. "We have the test results ready within a day. We set up camps in March to have follow-up tests in needed, but patients with serious conditions are encouraged to go to our Kidney and Research centre in Moghbazaar for further treatment," he explains. "Each year, we have a new slogan for World Kidney Day, and this year's slogan is Kidneys for Life-Stop Acute Kidney Injury."

Although there is no exact data on the number