

FROM THE PRESS

International kidney trade

At least 10 hospitals and laboratories are under the scanner and scores of healthcare staff are being questioned for their alleged role in a multi-crore kidney transplant racket based in Gurgaon near Delhi. Eight cars have been seized which were used to ferry patients from the guest house to the Palam Vihar hospital.

During raids of the properties of Amit Kumar, the doctor who coordinated the racket, the police seized 48 letters of request for kidney transplant, most of them from outside the country, especially Greece. Meanwhile, two non-resident Indians and two Greek nationals, who were to undergo transplant and were detained during raids, are being questioned to ascertain how the kidney gang contacted their foreign clients. Five labourers who had been brought in for their kidneys were also rescued during the raids.

The police suspect Amit Kumar had removed the kidneys of at least 20 farmers hailing from Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh in 2000. In all, the gang is suspected to have conducted 500 transplants with most of the victims hailing from Meerut, Ghaziabad and Moradabad districts of Uttar Pradesh.

Staff reporter. More hospitals under kidney racket scanner. *The Hindu*. January 29, 2008. <http://www.thehindu.com/2008/01/29/stories/2008012956680100.htm>

Blood "donation" under gunpoint

Police in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, rescued 17 people from a house where they were held hostage and forced to donate blood, apparently as frequently as once a week. The blood was supplied to hospitals in the region. Five people were arrested who worked as lab technicians in various hospitals in the area. Donors came from various parts of the country in search of jobs and had been promised Rs 300 per unit of blood donated. The donors had tried to escape several times but were too weak to do so.

TNN. Blood bank with hostage donors. *The Times of India*, Mumbai, March 17, 2008.

Vasectomies without consent

At least 60 men in the district of Bharuch, Gujarat, have filed complaints with the health department stating that doctors of the Bharuch Civil Hospital conducted vasectomies on them without their consent. Two of these men died, apparently from complications of the procedure. According to the district health officer, 1,226 sterilisations were conducted in 2007, compared to just five in 2006. Health workers or "motivators" get Rs 250 for every man that they convince to undergo a vasectomy. It is not known how many men were duped into undergoing a "routine medical checkup and undergoing a "minor painless surgery" - but were sterilised instead. The men were apparently paid Rs 1,100 after they signed some forms but they were not aware of what the forms contained.

Harish Joshi and Yogesh Pareek. Unwed youth falls for vasectomy ruse. 1,226 surgeries in Bharuch in 12 months raise ghost of Emergency era scam, two dead. *The Times of India*, Mumbai, March 26, 2008.

Gross medical negligence

A consumer forum directed Indraprastha Apollo hospital to pay Rs eight lakh as compensation for "gross medical negligence". Mukesh Rathore's son was admitted to Apollo hospitals for injuries suffered in a car accident and operated upon to fix a fracture. After discharge he complained of pain in the affected joint but was disregarded and he took a second opinion. A senior orthopaedic surgeon said his bone had remained dislocated and he had to be operated on again.

TNN. Negligence costs Delhi hospital Rs 8L. *The Times of India*, Mumbai, March 3, 2008.

Clinical trials by pig heart surgeon banned

Dhaniram Baruah, the controversial cardiac surgeon who had hit headlines by transplanting a pig's heart to a human body, has been barred by the Assam government from carrying out any clinical trials on patients till his claims were cleared by "appropriate authorities" in the government of India.

Health minister Himanata Biswa Sharma stated this at the Assam state assembly. The government noticed his claims of curing patients of various ailments in the past few months and has asked him to provide his findings so that those could be verified.

The issue figured in the zero hour discussion when Ananta Deka of the CPI (M) raised the matter on the basis of a newspaper report in which an eminent cardiologist demanded an inquiry into the pig heart doctor's claims.

Express News service, Assam bans pig doc's clinical trials. *The Indian Express*, March 7, 2008.

The state of psychiatric care

West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has sought a report from the state health minister on the prevailing conditions at the Pavlov Hospital for psychiatric disorders in Kolkata. Responding to the issue raised through an adjournment motion moved by Trinamool Congress MLA Sonali Guha and others, he said the situation at the hospital was frightening and asked the state health minister to look into it.

Guha said in the women's ward, a number of patients didn't have clothes. They didn't even have a towel to dry themselves after a bath. Though patients are supposed to get articles of daily use at the government's expense, these could not be found. Even goods sent by their families disappeared. There aren't enough essential medicines or sedatives either. Male barbers visited the wards for female patients. For 280 patients, there are only six doctors.

Staff Reporter. Buddha seeks report on Pavlov Hospital. *Expressindia.com* posted online March 14, 2008