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## Bahawalpur is becoming a kidney market.

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No one had ever thought that poverty in Pakistan would assume such an alarming proportion that will compel people to sell their organs. Besides shocking reports of suicides being committed due to poverty, Pakistan is earning notoriety for being a 'flourishing kidney market'.

An increased number of visitors from abroad are traveling to the country to fly out with a brand new kidney, and Pakistan is now thought to be a growing centre of global 'organ tourism'. The trade has flourished in the country, most notably since India placed a ban on the practice 10 years ago, diverting traffic to Pakistan.

Transplantation in a developed country is not an easy task. Any patient suffering from renal failure who needs a kidney transplant has to wait for many months not only in search of kidneys but also for transplant surgeries. That is why Pakistan is considered the most congenial place to have a kidney at an affordable rate and also its transplantation in a shorter length of time.

People living in abject poverty have no option but to resort to sell their organs to fulfill their financial needs. It is assumed that people can survive with one kidney and this perception has led to a considerable increase in the number of kidney sellers. Although no consolidated data is available regarding the number of those persons who have sold their kidneys, undoubtedly they are in thousands. Mostly such people belong to different backward areas of the country but a village of Yazman in Bahawalpur district is notoriously popular for this sale and it has been reported that no young male member in this village has two kidneys. Every man has sold out one and is surviving on one. The area police have confirmed 30 reported cases all from the same village whereas there must be other unreported cases.

Presently there is no law to check this illegal sale. Parliamentarian Commission for Human Rights did draft a legislation suggesting punishments for those involved in this illegal and heinous trade but this law has so far not been incorporated in the statute book.

Recently the Supreme Court of Pakistan took suo motu notice of this trade. Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, while conducting the hearing of this case, ordered registration of cases against those involved in the sale of kidneys. He also ruled that those doctors who conduct these surgeries are equally responsible of committing a crime and they should be proceeded against. The bench has issued notices to the federal health secretary, attorney general of Pakistan and all the four provincial advocates general asking them to ensure that this practice is stopped in their respective jurisdictions.

The court issued these directions a few days ago on the application of one Muhammad Asghar, a resident of village Yazman in Bahawalpur district, who had complained that a few persons had forcibly operated upon his son, Muhammad Amjad, and removed his kidney. And the district and sessions judge had exonerated all the accused of charges.

On court notice DSP Investigation Yazman, Khawar Zaman Lodhi, submitted before the bench that the boy willingly sold his kidney for Rs75,000 but when he did not get the promised payment, he lodged an FIR in the police station. The DSP submitted that the victim gave his kidney with his consent. But the bench rejected the assertion and said even then it was illegal and liable to prosecution.

The chief justice also referred to a documentary of a private TV channel wherein a village was shown where almost all the male residents had sold their kidneys because of poverty.

News Item : Pakistan Tribune

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