



**Clockwise from top left, the tattered seats of an ambulance in which a boy with a fractured leg is lying. CNG cylinders kept inside an ambulance near Pangu Hospital. Microbuses converted to ambulances parked outside the hospital. A man is taking a nap inside an ambulance. An oxygen cylinder is left leaning on the seat. A spare tyre kept next to an oxygen cylinder and a fan inside an ambulance. Microbuses that have been turned into ambulances in front of DMCH. The photos were taken yesterday.**



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, PALASH KHAN, PRABIR DAS



# Risk all yours

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 Unofficial sources, however, put the figures at 6,000 and 5,400.  
 The privately-managed ambulance service is run with no regulatory mechanism whatsoever.  
 Raghib Manzoor, CEO of CritiCare.com and founder secretary general of Bangladesh Society of Emergency Medicine, said in any ambulance, there should be a paramedic, monitor, oxygen cylinder with face mask, portable ventilation machine and other life-saving equipment.  
 "Ambulances in Bangladesh are basically medical vehicles as they only transport patients and nothing else."  
 In Bangladesh, the commonly perceived notion about ambulance is: It is a worn out microbus with a bed, an oxygen cylinder and a siren, that's it.  
 According to Dhaka City Ambulance Owner Cooperative Ltd, 70 percent of the ambulances do not even have air conditioning, let alone other basic facilities usually required

for an ambulance.  
 And these are not all. Most drivers do not have any medic training and in cases unskilled drivers are used to drive these vehicles. Such was the case on Saturday when four people's lives ended in front of Dhaka Medical College Hospital as an ambulance drove over them.  
 The ambulances at Dhaka Medical College Hospital is mostly owned by the class-IV hospital employees and their relatives, said sources. The helpers of the ambulances roam around different wards to see who would need an ambulance.  
 Mohammad Asad, ambulance driver of Chowdhury Enterprise, standing before his ambulance in front of Nitor said he was not a regular driver of the ambulance. Wearing a lungi and a dirty shirt, the chain smoker said that on an average he has to manage two trips every day to make profit.  
 "The job is hectic and tiresome."  
 Experts say ambulance is a very important part of pre-hospital system

if a patient gets proper care during the transportation time, the chance of survival for a critical patient gets higher.  
 Manzoor of CritiCare.com said the first hour of any patient is considered as the "golden hour" and proper care for the patient during that time is crucial.  
 "In Bangladesh, patients were carried in so called ambulances. Patients' relatives see the sufferings and pain of the patients but cannot do anything," Manzoor said.  
 Experts said private ambulance service providers took advantage of the inadequate ambulance facilities in the state-run hospitals and inadequate regulations, resulting in this chaotic situation.  
 When a microbus gets 10-15 years old and persistently faces mechanical issues, it is turned into an ambulance with a certain amount of fee paid to the BRTA, ambulance owners and BRTA officials said.  
 Saidur Rahman, director (Hospital)

of Directorate General of Health Services, said, "There was no ambulance regulation but there was an order which is updated and now awaiting in the ministry for vetting."  
 Moreover, there is no comprehensive standard or studies which can show what an ambulance should ideally have or how many in Bangladesh have those facilities.  
 Md Sanaul Haque, assistant director of the BRTA, said, "After running a microbus for 10-15 years on the streets, owners convert microbuses into ambulances giving a fixed charge for registration."  
 Asked how the conversion takes place, he said the microbus owners come to the BRTA office with updated and original papers. The BRTA inspectors see whether the microbus is "properly turned into an ambulance" -- if its seats and oxygen cylinders are properly installed, he added.  
 Responding to the query whether there was any checklist for such conversion, he said, "Not that much." The

inspectors just look over the vehicles.  
 He said very few proper ambulances get imported.  
 Mohammad Momin Ali, owner of Alif Ambulance, said drivers and associates of ambulance services should be experts and kind hearted but unfortunately most of them are not.  
 "An ambulance driver should know how to operate oxygen cylinder, provide first aid but who will train them? They just carry a patient and nothing else."  
 He said, "AC is not essential as it is not medicine rather it relaxes the patient. Many patients simply do not want the AC due to various health complications."  
 He also said the private ambulances cannot enter the state-run hospitals due to strong syndicates of hospital staffers.  
 "We usually avoid state-run hospitals as we get harassed whenever we carry any patient there." He admitted that there was no regulation in the ambulance sector.

# KALPANA CHAKMA 20 years gone, case yet to be solved

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati  
 Twenty years have passed since abduction of Kalpana Chakma, but the case has yet to be solved.  
 The investigation officer of the case has been changed several times, but each of them has failed to make any headway.  
 Following the previous instances, Sayed Tarikul Hasan, superintendent of police of Rangamati, submitted the final report of the case to a court on October 7.  
 The district police boss said the real culprits who kidnaped Kalpana could not be identified. If they found any new evidence, the case would be revived, he added. Kalpana, the then organising secretary of the Hill Women's Federation (HWF), an  
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A portion of this road in front of Dhaka Medical College Hospital used to remain occupied by a fleet of private ambulances, as seen in the file photo, inset. All were gone yesterday following Saturday's incident in which four people were run over and killed by an ambulance inside the hospital.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# Teen driver

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 people injured.  
 SI Alam, investigation officer of the case, told the court that driver Sohag and ambulance owner Mahfuz were on the run.  
 Four people, including a pregnant woman Amena Begum, were killed when the ambulance ran them over inside the DMCH near the emergency gate.  
 Doctors performed a caesarean on Amena Saturday noon but could not save the baby. She too died of her injuries in the evening.  
 According to DMCH sources, around 70 ambulances are usually parked on both sides of the road in front of the hospital every day.  
 Following Saturday's incident, no ambulance was found in the area, said police and DMCH sources.  
 Sources said most of the ambulances, including the one involved in the accident, were owned and managed by lower-class staff of the hospital.  
 The DMCH has four ambulances, two of which are out of service, added sources.  
 Contacted, Zillur Rahman, a ward master of the hospital, said absence of ambulances did not create any major problems as relatives of patients hired ambulances from different areas.

# Hasina, Modi

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 In response, Hasina told Modi about the steps her government has taken in combating terror including a crackdown on radical elements and creating and spreading social awareness against radicalisation of youths, Shahidul and Ihsanul said.  
 They said discussions are at various levels between Bangladesh and India on Hasina's possible official visit to India in December this year but no final decision has been made as yet. More discussions on this will take place between the two sides. "Let us see."  
 Hasina's previous visit to India was in January 2010.  
 A deal on the Teesta water-sharing has remained in limbo ever since West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had opposed inking it and opted out of the then Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka in September 2011 at the eleventh hour.  
 Since then, both Manmohan and his successor Modi have repeatedly assured Hasina that efforts were on to work out a consensus between West Bengal government and federal Indian government on the Teesta issue.  
 Other bilateral issues as well as the South Asian security situation were discussed by the two leaders.  
 Shahidul and Ihsanul said the two

# prime ministers agreed that given the current situation in South Asia, it was not conducive to holding of the Saarc Summit in Pakistan next month, and postponing it was a "right decision".

Both the leaders also agreed that questions had been raised about the future of Saarc and only the top leaderships of the countries in the region could find answers to those questions.  
**JMB man**  
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 judges Jagannath Pandey and Sohel Ahmed in a suicide blast in the district town.  
 Arif was on the run when the verdict was announced. He was arrested from Mymensingh on July 10, 2007, months after six other condemned accused in the case were hanged on March 29 in 2007 at different jails.  
 Except Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, four others are Abdul Awal, JMB's Majlish-e-Shura (highest decision-making body) member and Rahman's son-in-law, Ataur Rahman Sunny, the outfit's military commander and Rahman's youngest brother, suicide bomber Iftekhar Hasan Mamun and another Shura member Khaled Saifullah.  
 Arif is from Bandargashiya of Barguna Sadar upazilla.