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## Down to Earth

### Disposal of City's Hospital Wastes

By A S M Nurunnabi

In normal civic life, management of the city's wastes has always been a challenging task. As it is, this task isn't normally done well with the result that such slipshod management practices sometimes create hazardous public health issues. Management of hospital wastes is important to meet public health requirements.

There are many forms of waste that can do harm to people's health. Experts have it that exposure to toxic elements like lead, cadmium, mercury, DDT, PCB, and certain chemicals can pose serious health problems. In developed countries, most of these risks have already been identified and brought under control, but not so in the developing world where many of such risks remain beyond the ken of expert knowledge.

Even where any such risks are readily identifiable, it is not an easy task to impose controls. There are other harmful implications: as climate changes and global warming have increased the planet's heat-related diseases, they also change the pattern of distribution of infection and vector-borne diseases entailing heavy tolls.

This makes it more important to do something about hospital wastes, much of which can be highly toxic and threatening to life.

It is common knowledge that large hospitals like Dhaka Medical College Hospital normally dispose of their wastes on roadside garbage heap. So far as the Dhaka Medical College is concerned, not only does it not have a medical waste manage-

ment system, it does not even have an incinerator to decontaminate the infectious waste.

However, in the absence of any real data on the disposal of waste and the lack of any detailed information on the risks to health, controlling the disposal of waste becomes difficult. In this context, it may be noted that as the increased population puts added pressure on the hospitals, many have to increase their capacity to accommodate patients, which means the amount of hospital waste they produce have also a tendency to increase.

It also seems relevant to point out also that in the Dhanmondi area alone, private hospitals and clinics have proliferated to such an extent that there is room for debate how the vast amount of medical waste from such organisations are taken care of. It needs to be kept in mind that all such organisations are located in densely populated area and there is a real threat of infection from such high volume of medical waste which in all cases seem to remain contaminated.

That this is now a pressing problem for the hospital authorities as well as the local authorities is understood. What is not understood is the need for effective action to meet the exigencies arising from such a situation. The other awesome aspect is that exposure to hospital waste can not only affect reproduction but also the unborn foetus.

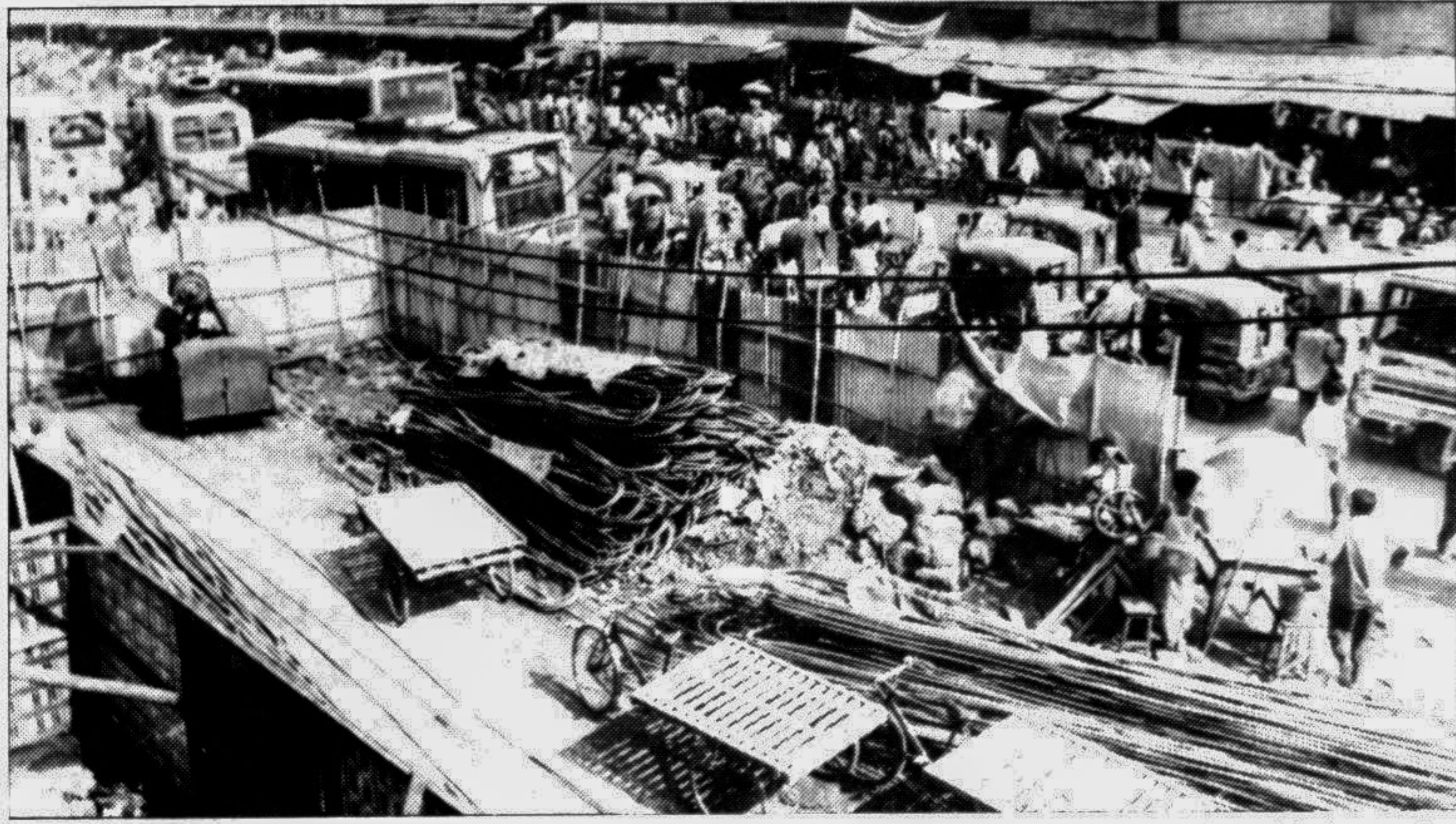
Medical waste generated at any hospital, big or small, if left by the roadside until it can be carted away exposes people to

danger. Therefore it behoves the hospital authorities to immediately arrange for the pre-treatment of hazardous waste prior to disposal, and instead of leaving them lying around until Dhaka City Corporation garbage vans deign to collect them, devise effective alternative means of their disposal.

According to knowledgeable sources, there is no scope for taking the menace from contaminated medical waste lightly. On the one hand, there is a rising trend of establishment of new private hospitals and clinics all over the city which, coupled with the existing ones, contribute substantially to the growth of medically harmful environment from contaminated medical waste; on the other hand, there is no perceptible awareness among competent quarters to adopt suitably effective measures to tackle the menace.

In this context, it seems there is need for enacting suitable legislation to control the hazardous situation. In the opinion of experts in this field, given the necessary professional awareness and will, it is not very costly to install decontaminating equipment in medical establishment. Even for medical establishment of small size, there are versions of decontaminating equipment which may not be prohibitive in price for installation.

The sooner these considerations drawn on those at the policy-making and executing levels, the better will be the prospects for improving the medical environment for the city.



Construction materials stacked up on nearly half the road adjacent to Fulbaria Market in the city almost block normal traffic movement. — Star photo

## ULFA rebels blow up oil pipeline

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** Suspected separatist guerrillas blasted a crude oil pipeline feeding India's oldest refinery in the northeastern state of Assam, police said today, reports Reuters.

"An oil pipeline at Bordubi near Dihing forest area caught fire and initial investigation showed that there was a bomb blast," Dirajuddin Ahmed, Superintendent of Police in Assam's special operations unit said.

Dihing, 490-km east of Guwahati, is in the state's Tinsukia district.

The blast, which took place on Thursday night, was suspected to be the handiwork of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), Ahmed said.

Details on the extent of damage to the pipeline was still awaited, he said.

The pipeline, owned by state-run crude producer Oil India Ltd (OIL), feeds the Digboi refinery, which has an annual processing capacity of 650,000 tonnes.

OIL officials were not immediately available for comments. ULFA, which is fighting for self-rule in Assam, accuses New Delhi of neglecting the state's

economy and exploiting the region's rich mineral resources.

Police said ULFA militants last night had killed five security guards who were on their way to the regional headquarters of Oil and Natural Gas Corp in Sibsaigar, 360-km east of Guwahati.

The central industrial security force personnel were returning from an oil drilling site when they were attacked by ULFA guerrillas, police said.

## 7 Kashmir rebels killed in gunfights

**SRINAGAR, Nov 27:** Seven separatist Muslim militants and a soldier were killed in two separate shootouts over-night in the northern Indian state of Kashmir, police said today, reports AFP.

**BNP warns**  
From Page 1  
lic support in favour of 'Sheaf of Paddy' the election symbol of BNP.

Bhuiyan also claimed that some ministers and AL leaders were violating the election code of conduct by trying to influence the local administration. Besides, they are threatening the opposition activists with filing cases if they do not join Awami League, the BNP secretary general alleged.

Bhuiyan urged the Election Commission officials to discharge their duties neutrally to ensure free and fair polls. He also demanded of the EC action against the ministers and AL leaders for violating election rules.

Presided over by Abdul Hamid, the meeting was addressed by, among others, BNP MPs Fazlur Rahman Patol, Lutfor Rahman Khan Azad Ruhul Qudus Talukder, Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Rafiqul Islam Bakal and party leaders Habibur Rahman Habib and Major Gen (ret'd) Z A Khan.

## Road accidents kill 3 in Sylhet

**SYLHET, Nov 27:** Three people were killed and 15 others injured in three road accidents in the district today, reports APB.

Police said a Jagannath-bound coaster from Sylhet rammmed a roadside shop near a mosque when its driver lost control over the vehicle at about 11 am.

Pedestrian Jabul Hossain, 25, of Telli village under sadar thana, died on the spot and four others received injuries.

Of the injured, Abdul Jalil, Amin Khan, and Masuk were admitted to Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Besides, some people were injured when an auto-tempo skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch at Kadirpur village in sadar thana today.

Seriously injured Kazi Abdul Ahad, 45, was rushed to Osmani Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

Another youngman, Nimai Chandra Nath, was seriously injured when a baby-taxi overturned in the town, Baluchar area today.

He succumbed to injuries at Osmani Medical College Hospital.

## 48-hr hartal called in town from today

### Arrest of Sirajganj BNP leader sparks violence

**SIRAJGANJ, Nov 27:** Opposition BNP will enforce a 48-hour hartal here from tomorrow demanding immediate release of its leader and Pourashava Chairman, reports UNB.

Police arrested Noor-e-Alam Helal, a former leader of BNP district unit, from a VGF card distribution programme at pourashava premises at 11 am today.

Police said he was arrested on charge of possessing explosives.

Immediately after the arrest, BNP brought out a protest procession in the town and damaged a stage of Awami League at Khan Shahab ground.

Rickshaw and truck workers also put up barricades in Bazar Station area.

Sporadic clashes were also reported from different parts of the town between the supporters of Awami League and BNP. Thirty-five people were injured in clashes.

Of the injured, 13 were admitted to the local hospitals and clinics.

Police lobbed teargas shells and resorted to baton charge to disperse the feuding groups.

Leaders of local BNP, however, threatened to enforce an indefinite strike in the town if pourashava chairman and other arrested leaders of BNP were not released immediately.

They also sought cooperation from the people to make 48-hour hartal a success.

Riot police have been deployed in different strategic points of the town to avert any untoward incidents.

## UP chairman held at Magura

**MAGURA, Nov 27:** A UP chairman and BNP leader was arrested today for his alleged involvement in terrorist activities in sadar thana areas, reports UNB.

Police said they took M-hirkanti Biswas, Hazrapur UP chairman and local BNP leader, into custody in connection with several cases against him.

## Parents of Faria Lara call on PM

**Proper enquiry assured**  
Parents of killed Pilot Faria Lara and mother of her co-pilot Syed Rafiqul Islam called on Prime Minister at Ganobhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

Faria Lara's mother Selina Hossain and father Anwar Hossain and Rafiq's mother Syeda Abeda Khanam told the Prime Minister about the tragic incident and appealed for proper and immediate investigation.

Consoling the parents with deep sympathy, the Prime Minister said, "no word can console the deaths of two pilots. The deaths of two promising youths are utterly unfortunate."

The Prime Minister assured the members of the bereaved families of taking immediate action for proper investigation into the incident.

General secretary of Flying Academy Waresat Bassan Belal was present during the meeting.

Lara and Rafiq were killed in a tragic air accident on September 27 near Dhaka.

## PM: Hospital

From Page 1  
Describing children as the future of the country, the prime minister said "our prosperity depends on how we can build up our children as worthy citizens. We can develop our children properly by ensuring them better health and education."

She said her government plans to set up a health sub-centre in every union of the country where special attention would be given to mother and childcare, including vaccination for the children.

Hasina said construction of 3,178 union health sub-centres had been completed so far while the rest would be completed by the year 2003. Besides, she said, health services facilities styled as "essential service package" has been launched under which one community clinic would be set up for every 6,000 people.

She said the objective of the clinic would be to ensure child-care facilities and reduce child mortality at the grassroots level.

She said Bangladesh attained 90 to 95 per cent success in the field of polio vaccination for the children below five years.

Hasina lauded the role of Prof M R Khan in establishing a 'beautiful institution' for the treatment of the children from all strata of life. She also remembered the supreme sacrifice of Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon who was killed on this day by the autocratic regime in 1990.

The prime minister formally inaugurated the hospital and went round its various sections.

## JCD leader arrested in Pabna

**PABNA, Nov 27:** Police arrested a local leader of Chhatra Dal from his residence at Sunagar and recovered a country-made revolver from his possession early today, reports APB.

Harunur Rashid Mollah, 25, convener of Sunagar thana unit was arrested in a raid prior to Pabna-2 by-election scheduled for December 10.

In a pre-election drive, police arrested a total of 120 persons so far from different parts of the constituency.

Harun was wanted in about a dozen criminal cases, police said.

## Rajuk's rejoinder

From Page 1  
taken some programmes to protect lake-side lands and prevent the allottees from further encroachment. There is no way to prevent the allottees from further encroachment other than constructing walkways or driveways along the lake. This is no case of filling up lakes as stated in the news item, but constructing walkway or driveways.

**Our reply:** In no way, the Rajuk rejoinder contradicts The Daily Star report. Rajuk, for whatever purpose it might have, is currently filling up a huge stretch of the Gulshan lake. The report quoted the Rajuk Chairman as admitting filling up of "some areas" of the "endangered" waterbody.

This act itself is in gross violation of the Dhaka Master Plan (1995-2015). In Volume-II of the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan, under Urban Area Plan, page-55, paragraph-2, it is clearly stated, "Gulshan lake is under constant pressure to be filled by Rajuk for creating new residential plots. If this is allowed to continue unhindered, it will destroy not only this wonderful open space but also the essential retention capacity to drain out stormwater from a vast area resulting in local flooding and water logging."

As regards implementation of the Master Plan, it may be mentioned here that Rajuk recently approved building plans (including some high-rise structures) in the city totally ignoring the Master Plan and the office procedures. In most cases the discretionary power vested in the Chairman to overrule the Master Plan in exceptional cases, is being used indiscriminately. Contents of the 1995 Master Plan, to most of the top ranking Rajuk officials, is till date, unfamiliar. They still officially refer to the Dhaka Master Plan which was prepared in the late fifties and approve plans for buildings, projects and mega-projects.

We stand by our report.



Supporters of the Indian ruling party's coalition partner Shiva Sena demonstrate near the Parliament in New Delhi yesterday against a planned tour of Pakistan cricket team. —AFP Photo

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## Pinochet weeps as threat of trial looms large

**LONDON, Nov 27:** A magistrate today gave the government more time to decide whether to go ahead with extradition proceedings for Gen Augusto Pinochet, or let the former Chilean leader go home.

Home Secretary Jack Straw won an extra week, until Dec 11, to reach a decision.

Chief Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate Graham Parkinson said he would expect Pinochet to appear in court on that date, "subject to any medical reports."

A Madrid report adds: Pinochet broke into tears upon learning he faces the threat of extradition to Spain on charges of genocide, torture and terrorism. Spanish newspapers reported yesterday.

Pinochet was read the news Wednesday — his 83rd birthday — at the London hospital where he is under police guard, minutes before Britain's highest court upheld his detention and ruled he did not have immunity from prosecution.

The man allegedly respon-

sible for killing and torturing thousands during his 13-year rule, put his head in his hands and sobbed, leading El Pais reported, citing unidentified sources close to the case.

But Jose Luis Morales, an official at the Chilean Embassy in London, was quoted by the Santiago afternoon daily La Hora as denying that Pinochet cried.

Morales told the newspaper that he broke the news to Pinochet and that "he reacted with disappointment but with calm."

El Pais said a British woman official had read the ruling to Pinochet. Two other Spanish papers also reported that Pinochet had cried.

Spanish jurists believe that a final decision on extradition could take a year. In the meantime, Judge Baltasar Garzon, who instigated the case, may travel to London to question the former dictator.

A Chilean government report says 3,000 people were murdered or disappeared at the

hands of the secret police during Pinochet's dictatorship, which began in 1973 when he overthrew Salvador Allende, an elected Marxist. Allende died in the coup.

Chilean Foreign Minister Jose Miguel Insulza will head a delegation this week to press Britain to release Pinochet, who was arrested Oct 16 in London.

Chilean President Eduardo Frei complained that the affair violates Chile's sovereignty, and endangers the country's fragile transition to democracy, which began when Pinochet stepped down in 1990.

News of the ruling was greeted with anger by Pinochet's supporters in Chile who attacked journalists in Santiago. The Pinochet Foundation said it lamented the mistreatment of journalists at its headquarters in Santiago.

But the threat of extradition to Spain has convinced Pinochet's opponents at home that a trial could be possible — even in his native Chile.

## South Africa 217 for 6

**JOHANNESBURG, Nov 27:** South Africa were 217 for six at the close on the second day of the first Test against West Indies at the Wanderers today, reports Reuters.

**Scores:** West Indies 261; South Africa 217/6.

## Arms recovered in city: One held

Police arrested a man along with huge firearms from a house in city's Mirpur area at midnight on Thursday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip off, Mirpur thana police stormed the house at Section 1 of Block-B and recovered two revolvers, three rifles, 16 bullets and bomb manufacturing materials.

House owner Nurul Huq was arrested for possessing the illegal arms.

## EU team

From Page 1  
a project for street children at Jiniira near the city and said the EU may provide funding for replication of more such projects to help destitute children.

She expressed satisfaction at the non-formal education programmes and felt that "a link" could be established between non-formal and formal education, particularly relating to curriculum.

Albuquerque said attempts would be made to reach EU assistance to smaller NGOs but felt that it might take time to build a suitable system to synergise their activities.

She said her team visited the CHT and felt that following the signing of the treaty an enabling environment has been created for initiating development process.

"We are going to discuss what kind of support we can give to projects in the CHT on our return to Brussels."

Albuquerque said human rights in developing countries including Bangladesh is also one of the concerns of the EC and it will provide funding for a study this year and also for strengthening democratic institutions.

## Monkey

From Page 1  
Mostag Khan said.

"Still, people are not hostile to them because hostility will bring them more trouble. Those who earlier killed or ill-treated any monkey, had to suffer consequences," he said.

But they are not always peaceable among themselves. They are divided into three groups which local people identify as Bazar Group, Adamjee Group and Gala Group. They often fight in groups for "dominance" when one group trespasses into the area of another, local people said.

Some monkeys died of starvation during the recent flood. They passed their days on rooftops almost without food. Talking to this correspondent, local businessman Afisuruddin Bepari, Nimzal Bepari, Delwar Hossain Munshi and a BM College student Saidur Rahman said none came to feed the animals as people themselves were in extreme misery.