Blood pressure lowering may boost life expectancy

REUTERS, New York

Blood pressure lowering may lead to gains of more than two years in life expectancy in some patients, according to researchers.

Dr Howard D Sesso, of Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, and colleagues used a cardiovascular disease event Markov model to estimate life expectancy benefits of antihypertensive treatment, based on systolic and diastolic blood pressure reduction.

They used prospective data from 57,573 subjects, and defined seven patient states: no cardiovascular disease, stroke, myocardial infarction, revascularization, history of cardiovascular disease, non-cardiovascular disease death, and cardiovascular

"Risk functions were developed from gender-specific multivariate Cox proportional hazards models for primary events and age-, smoking-, and diabetes-adjusted models for secondary events." Dr. Sesso and colleagues write in the medical journal Hypertension.

Baseline assumptions included

hypothetical pretreatment blood pressures of 160/95 or 150/90 mm Hg; strategies that lowered blood pressure by 20/13 mm Hg (strategy A) or by 13/8 mm Hg (strategy B); and age of 35 years.

Among subjects with an initial blood pressure of 160/95 mm Hg, strategy A produced gains in life expectancy of 2.43 years for hypertension alone and of 2.80 years for hypertension plus diabetes. A gain of 2.43 years was seen for smokers with hypertension and diabetes. Similar gains were observed in individuals with an initial blood pressure of 150/90 mm

Furthermore, for individuals with an initial blood pressure of 160/95, strategy A provided additional life expectancy gains compared with strategy B.

Sesso's group also found that "initial blood pressure level did not affect the magnitude of life expectancy gains for equivalent blood pressure reductions."

Overall, the findings suggest that $lowering\,blood\,pressure\,in\,hypertensive$ patients, especially those with other rdiovascular disease risk factors such as diabetes or smoking, "has the potential to provide substantial gains in life

Hakaluki doom

to feed. The existing fish resources are the last vestiges of the once abun-

"One of the reasons for proliferation of villages in the area is the myopic government strategy to build dams in the upstream feeder rivers, which has silted up the area resulting in emergence of new lands. This in turn has encouraged encroachment and the process continues, thereby depleting the wetland's resources,' notes leading zoologist Dr Ali Reza

Another recent ominous development is the installation of around two dozen brick kilns to fuel the development spree in the haor area. During a visit to Hakaluki, this correspondent found that brick roads and buildings have largely replaced the natural surroundings of the *haor*.

A large portion of the wetland has now been converted for agriculture and poultry farming. Farmers are growing high-yield varieties of paddy in the *haor* land while many others have set up duck farms. All these activities are systematically destroying the area's ecology

"People have taken over the pastures. Birds that once arrived here in flocks no longer do so as the insects they prey on have also dwindled," Dr Ali Reza points out

Besides, clearing of riparian vegetation and unplanned cultivation in the watershed resulting from absence of land use policy and faulty leasing practices, coupled with pollution from industrial effluents and agrochemicals continue to upset the ecological balance of the haor.

Spread over 45,000 acres of land. the *haor* is now characterised by large depressed basins. While the entire area goes under water during monsoon, only 1,221 acres remain under-

water in the dry season. The process

of sedimentation intensifies during

the rainy season when loose soil from

hills on three sides of the haor is

washed down into the wetland. As many as 117 of the 212 beels of the haor have dried out already. The main river Juri and some branches of the river have also dried out due to the sedimentation.

Despite massive habitat loss, the haor still supports migratory waterfowl and a substantial amount of fish, but both are disappearing fast. Since heavy logging has left only five per cent of the original swamp forest, there are hardly any wild animals in

"Elderly people here tell us there were elephants as well as freshwater dolphins in the area some 50 years ago. All those are now gone, but still we have a chance to revive the ecology of Hakaluki," said Malay Sarkar, field manager of the Centre for local non-government organisation implementing a project with the help of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

As per a CNRS report, birds have declined by 73 per cent and mollusks by 66 per cent. Besides, 32 out of 107 species of fish are on the endangered

A government programme to protect the Hakaluki haor taken up two years ago with help from Global Environment Fund (GEF) is vet to produce any tangible result as conservation activities have largely been restricted to a few official visits to the

B Chy plans

saw the ailing father-in-law of his son

Mahi B Chowdhury

Monga-affected north regions, sources

source said: "He will hold at least three roundtables on as many themes.' The first roundtable will discuss

means to cut crimes and another to curb corruption. One of the roundtables will virtually focus on the "Hawa Bhaban" under the title 'What Happens to Democracy when Power Becomes Centralised'.

The former president wants different leading newspapers to join him in organising the discussions.

He also plans to sit separately with newspaper editors, economists, educationists, engineers, doctors, other professionals and businesspersons.

At an Iftar party on November 22, Chowdhury said the civil societies should unite under a platform, but left it to the future to decide whether the forum would turn into a political party

"The sense of utter insecurity of life, the loss of human lives on account of the existing law and order and the critical corruption situation demand very

urgent attention," Chowdhury said. He had to resign from presidency within seven months of taking office under pressure from his former party the prime minister. In addition, 200 elected members of

He told the press earlier that the

He said there should be two vice-

government system should be modified

parliament should select another 100 MPs on pro-rata basis, he observed.

Default loans

the development financial institutions (DFIs) by 8 percent to 48 per cent.

On September 30, the total loans of the banking sector stood at Tk 88.650 crore, of which Tk 21,248 crore were in classified amount. The figures were Tk 85,273 crore and Tk 23,962 crore on

The NCBs reduced their classified amount by Tk 1,126 crore during the nine months to Tk 11,053 crore from Tk 12,179 crore. Moreover, with strict control on new loan disbursement their total loan also decreased from Tk 36,111 crore on December 31 last year to 35,550 crore.

The PCBs reduced their classified loans by Tk 203 crore to Tk 5,280 crore on September 30 this year from Tk 5,483 crore on December 531 last year.

The DFIs reduced their classified loans by Tk 1.371 crore to 4.790 crore and the FCBs reduced such loans by Tk 12 crore to Tk 125 crore.

from custody:3 cops suspended UNB, Munshiganj

Criminal escapes

Three policemen were suspended here yesterday for negligence of duty. Havilder Intaz, constables Matiar and Shukur Ali were suspended as a criminal managed to escape from

their custody in hospital at 3:30am

Villagers caught hold of Abul Kalam near Rampal College on November 22 and beat him mercilessly. They later handed him over to the police.

Seriously injured Kalam was undergoing treatment at Munshigani General Hospital under police guard.

Aides Prodded **Reluctant Bush** on Iraq Trip

For a president fond of a tough-guy image, George W. Bush was uneasy when an aide casually asked him, "You want to go to Baghdad?'

With Bush safely back at his Crawford ranch on Friday, White House supporters seized on the US Thanksgiving Day visit to Iraq as a public-relations coup that could boost roop morale and Republican fund

But the trip -- one of the most secretive by any US president -- also highlighted how precarious security remains in the Iraqi capital, captured by U.S. forces in April.

Despite unprecedented precautions, the president slipped into Baghdad under cover of darkness on Thursday to minimise the risk of being targeted by surface-to-air missiles and was confined to the heavily guarded airport throughout his 2-1/2-hour stav.

"Obviously there continues to be a ecurity problem in the triangle around Baghdad," Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, said in Crawford. One day after the president left Iraq.

another high-profile visitor, New York Democratic Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, toured Baghdad to meet with troops and top officials from the occupation administration and aid groups. It was White House chief of staff Andrew Card who first proposed the

'Andy (Card), as he often does, said to Bush) almost in passing: Thanksgiving's coming up. Where do you want to go? You want to go to Baghdad?"' Rice recalled, and the planning got under way.

surprise trip -- not the president.

Seven months after his dramatic anding in a flight suit on the USS Abraham Lincoln with its "Mission Accomplished" banner, Bush conceded about the Iraq visit, "I was the biggest skentic of all. Instead of a flight suit, Bush wore a

standard Army jacket to meet with the troops, and acknowledged he thought all along" it might be too risky and that he "had a lot of questions" about secu-Bush aides considered scrapping the

visit less than a week ago after a DHL cargo plane, landing at the same airport, was hit by a surface-to-air missile

Bomb goes off in Tbilisi

AFP, Tbilisi

A bomb went off vesterday outside the headquarters of a party that opposed the downfall of former president Eduard Shevardnadze, but no-one was reported injured in the attack, a top party official told the news agency.

"Today, at 5:30 in the morning, a car stopped near our building. As soon the car pulled out, an explosion went off," said Gela Daneliya, one the leaders of the Labor Party.

"Thankfully, nobody was hurt," he

The Labour Party does not support Mikhail Saakashvili, who spearheaded the protest that led to Shevardnadze's overthrow.

5 get life FROM PAGE 12

Sona Miah -- have been absconding since the murder.

The judge of the Second Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday pronounced the verdict at a crowded courtroom

The court also acquitted 12 others of the case. The prosecution story in brief is

that the brothers -- Mosharraf and Abdul Malek -- were killed by a gang of local hoodlums following a previous enmity at Gazirtek under Dohar Police Station in Dhaka on May 6, 1996.

Later, Ashraf Khan, brother of the victims, filed a murder case with Dohar Police Station accusing 16 people the same day. The investigation officer of the

persons on October 31, 1996 showing 27 people as prosecution witnesses. The court framed charges against

case pressed charges against 24

the accused on January 14, 1998. Seventeen prosecution witnesses

were examined during trial.

Dhaka may allow Restriction on trade unionism under a

1980 law is one of the many incentives investors enjoy at the EPZs. The two EPZs boast mainly South Korean and Japanese investments, apart from local investment to the tune of \$600 million. The investors are threatening the EPZ authorities with withdrawal of investment if trade unions are allowed.

The US is the largest importer of Bangladeshi products, accounting for 44 percent of its total export. Although most US imports from Bangladesh fall outside the GSP, its cancellation may affect overall trade with Bangladesh. US Ambassador in Dhaka Harry K

Thomas has been saying that Washington would not offer the GSP to Bangladesh from January if it failed to introduce trade unionism in its exclusive industrial zones. Bangladesh and the US signed the

another three years on condition that Bangladesh would allow trade unions by then to enjoy the facility. Dhaka was trying to soften the US position on trade unions, but Washington gave cold shoulder to

Dhaka's appeal to give another three

years before the launch of trade unions.

GSP treaty in 1991 that expired in 2001.

Washington extended the pact by

A high-powered delegation visited Washington last month and asked for more time to give special training to workers before allowing trade union

The government fears trade unionism in the exclusive zones would allow unruly workers scope to often stage

"The deputy speaker must be present

in the House during the sitting and

only in the absence of the speaker

could he preside over the session. But

vou have been absent from your

specified seat in the House since your

election as the deputy speaker," the

The speaker said the deputy speak-

ers, in 1979, 1991 and 1996 parlia-

ments, were present in their desig-

nated seats in the House and they

presided over the House sessions in

the House of the tenth session on that

day, I allowed a member of the panel

chairman to preside over the sitting.

And I did not violate the rules of proce-

dure as such," the speaker said refer-

ring to the Article 74(3) of the constitu-

The acrimony between the speaker

and deputy speaker has been going on

since their election to the offices

Recently, the speaker allotted a room

within the deputy speaker's chamber

complex to a chairman of a parliamen-

The room was used as a cell during

the Commonwealth Parliamentary

Association Conference in October.

Soon after the allocation, the room

was occupied by breaking open the

lock at the dead of night. On the fol-

lowing day, the official of the deputy

speaker's office reoccupied the room.

When asked to comment, former

speaker Abdul Hamid told The Daily

Star yesterday the chamber of the

deputy speaker is part of the House

ber the speaker must inform him to

two packages to be implemented by

June 2004. The package-1 consists of

installation, testing, commissioning of

the mobile project in Dhaka and Sylhet

regions while package-2 is for

Package-1 of the project will be

awarded to Siemens Mobile

Communications at a cost of \$28.73 mil-

lion, while the \$23.72 million package-2 to

In choosing the contractors, the

BTTB has ignored Huawei's incorrect

statement regarding General Packet

Radio Service (GPRS) experience. The

BTTB procurement office on December

18 last year had cancelled three bids

including the Siemens' one for not

submitting mandatory documents,

Despite such major discrepancies,

the BTTB authorities had split the Tk

594.50 crore deal between Huawei and

Siemens. The authorities on September

22 asked these vendors to scale down

the cost of their quoted equipment by 35

percent to match the approved cost of

The BTTB's proposal for reduction

of 35 percent of the quoted price does

According to the government pro-

curement regulation, if the lowest

evaluated tender is significantly higher

than the prevailing market price, then

either the BTTB has to reduce the scope

not conform to the Public Procurement

Regulations 2003, experts said.

Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd.

sources said.

Chittagong, Bogra and Khulna regions.

is present in his cham-

and if he

tary standing committee.

"As you were not available inside

speaker said in his reply.

the absence of the speaker.

Dy speaker

strikes and work stoppages without any

Earlier on November 17, the ministry discussed the latest developments or the trade union issue at a meeting chaired by Aman and decided to raise it at the next board meeting of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) on November 30

Lankan PM

Harim Peiris said he could neither confirm nor deny the offer said to have been made to a committee of officials from both sides trying to work out a cohabitation working arrangement.

The President and Prime Minister's camps have officially described talks between them as making progress, but political sources on both sides said little headway had been made to resolve the underlying issue of resolving the bitterness between the two leaders.

Kumaratunga suspended parlia ment for two weeks blocking any legislative moves against her and sacked three government ministers earlier November 4. Her office announced a state of emergency, which was denied two days later.

Kumaratunga said she was constitutionally entitled to take over defence and had made a blunder by giving the defence job to a minister in Wickremesinghe's government that was elected in December 2001

preside over the session of parliament

If he expresses his inability or in his

absence the speaker may request a

He further said if the claim of the

Regarding the presence of the

deputy speaker was true, then the

constitution and the rules of proce-

deputy speaker in his designated chair

inside the House, Hamid, also the

deputy leader of the opposition, said

earlier on Saturday, Yilmaz said. He

was among six people handed over to

Istanbul's State Security Court on

Suicide bombers struck two syna-

gogues on November 15 and the offices

of British-based bank HSBC and the

Groups linked to Osama bin

Laden's al Oaeda network claimed

responsibility for the bombings, which

the United States says place EU candi-

date and NATO member Turkev at the

than 20 people they say are linked to

Turkish courts have charged more

The ruling Justice and

Development Party (AKP), suspected

by Turkey's powerful military for its

Islamist roots, has condemned the

bombings and vowed to track down the

came from the province of Bingol, an

impoverished region in Turkey's

mainly Kurdish southeast. Bingol is a

political stronghold of the AKP and was

a hotbed of Islamist fundamentalism in

As per Regulation 33, there is no

At the BTTB board meeting, mem-

The BTTB chairman informed the

scope to negotiate with the bidder or ask

the company to modify the tender price.

bers questioned the track records of the

board that the selected bidders were

experienced in manufacturing of

telecoms equipment. He also said the

BTTB did not draw up any vendor-

Pallabi police recovered her body from

Police suspect Fahima hanged

the first floor house of Faruquzzaman.

herself after driver Nazmul -- a tenant

of the ground floor -- turned down her

marriage proposal. The two had an

Nazmul is absconding since the

vo-storey mud house on November 19.

Earlier, a five-member parliamentary

team of the AL visited the scene and

blamed the incident on the ruling BNP

men. The team said the BNP-Jamaat-led

coalition government was persecuting

the religious minorities and political

opponents in a planned way to eliminate

affair for long, they said.

Hasina

specific tender document or standard.

Suicide

FROM PAGE 1

selected bidders, sources said.

Several of the suicide bombers

perpetrators.

Cell phone project

frontline of the "war on terrorism"

British consulate five days later

dure have certainly been violated.

panel chairman to take over.

that it was not mandatory.

Man held

UK says terror threat high in Saudi

REUTERS, Riyadh

The British embassy in Saudi Arabia has issued a warning saying the threat by militants remained high across the country and "terrorists may be in the final phases of planning attacks".

The statement on Saturday comes four days after Saudi officials said they thwarted a planned strike by militants who had packed a car with more than a tonne of explosives. "The discovery on November 25

by the Saudi authorities of a terrorist plot shows the terrorist threat across Saudi Arabia remains high," the embassy said in a wardens' notice published on its Web site. "As well as continuing to advise against all but essential travel to Saudi

Arabia, the (British Foreign Office) travel advice warns that terrorists may be in the final phases of planning attacks in the kingdom," it said. At least 18 people were killed when suspected al Qaeda bombers struck at

an expatriate compound on the

western edge of Riyadh earlier this

The embassy said its advice reflected the fact that "the threat from terrorism remains particularly serious". It warned the estimated 30,000 Britons in the Gulf state to take "all necessary steps" to ensure their

Two of four bomb attacks in Istanbul earlier this month, also blamed on Saudi-born militant Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network, targeted the British consulate and British-based bank HSBC. The other two bombs hit synagogues.

Mosad links

FROM PAGE 1

his contact with Tel Aviv," he said. "He was going to take part in a conference in Tel Aviv scheduled to begin on December 1," the police officer added.

It was however learnt that Shoib's movements were being monitored for quite sometime on suspicion of his connection with the Israeli secret service 'Mosad'. "He was going to Bangkok first and

was scheduled to fly for Israel, a country Bangladeshi citizens are barred from travelling to," he said. A correspondent of Russian news agency Itar-Tass, Shoib was sacked from his job but soon joined now defunct ATV owned by Aziz

Mohammad Bhai, During his job there. he was arrested on charge of smuggling information out of the country and was awarded a three-month term in the Shoib later joined Inquilab Television as managing director. But he

was sacked from his job on allegation of fund embezzlement last year. He joined the Bengali daily Inquilab as special correspondent, but is no

longer there for reasons unknown. Though Bangladeshis are forbidden to go to Israel, Shoib visited the Israel

capital last month, sources said. He published a number of write-ups in 'Cine Blitz' against anti-Israel sentiment across the world. In an article titled 'Midwest Opinion Forum Incubating Ultra Radicalism' published in the magazine in the November 12 issue, he wrote about the rise of al Qaeda fundamentalism in Bangladesh.

Police sources said a sedition case would be filed against Shoib.

Members of different law enforcing agencies, taking Shoib along with them were learnt to have been raiding different parts of the city till filing of this report at 8:00 last night for others having connection with Israel.

PM meets FROM PAGE 12

of BJP Chairman Naziur Rahman Maniur, Secretary General Kazi Firoz Rashid, IOJ faction Chairman Azizul Haq and leader Shahidul Islam, MP, and the other faction chief Fazlul Haq Amini, MP, with the premier as just 'an exchange of Eid greetings'

The leaders of the 'disgruntled coalition partners' pegged the meeting as 'politically important talks'.

"The ruling alliance leaders reiterated their firm resolve to cement their unity and work closely together in the days to come," said an official at the PMO, adding the meetings were arranged to exchange Eid greetings.

Sources said the premier wanted to

know why the coalition leaders did not

attend her Iftar and reception when

the leaders blamed their absence on $preoccupation\, and\, for eign\, tours.$ Amini raised the issue of Ahmadia sect and asked the prime minister to declare them non-Muslims in Bangladesh. Khaleda did not reply to

The alliance leaders appreciated the steps taken during Ramadan and Eid celebrations for ensuring people's

his appeal.

The issues of involving local people in uplift programmes and strengthening alliance activities also figured in

The IOJ leaders expressed their firm commitment to stay with the BNP-led alliance, resist people who are against Islam and Islamic values and not to join hands with the believers in secularism.

EU constitution talks hit big snags

Foreign ministers facing a deadline in two weeks for a final draft European Union constitution must still decide whether it should provide for a foreign minister or mention God when the expanded grouping enters the world stage

The 15-nation bloc expands to 25 nations next May. The ministers, who began discussions on a charter two months ago, have made little headway on other thorny issues, including the allocation of European Parliament seats and the powers of the European Central Bank. They will seek agreement for the

second day of a two-day meeting Saturday, but officials said it will be up to the leaders of the EU nations meeting in Brussels, Belgium, Dec. 12-13, to reach a compromise. "It is clear we are not at the moment

close to a deal." said Poland's European Affairs Minister Danuta Huebner. "Nothing is agreed until everything is

agreed," British Foreign Secretary Jack Strawtold BBC radio. Once a draft constitution is agreed on. the text will be published in all EU languages, then scrutinized in national

referendums. The charter would take effect Jan. 1, 2005. The biggest hurdle has been objections by Spain and Poland to the changes in the voting system in the 465-article draft

constitution. The draft constitution suggests that decisions be adopted if at least half the EU states representing 60 percent of the bloc's population are in favor.

But Spain and Poland want to stick to a 1999 deal allocating them 27 votes each in the EU executive commission, the group's decision-making body. That's two less than for the more populous Britain, France, Germany and Italy, which each get

"You can't just go and give 82 million Germans 29 votes, and then give a combined 80 million Poles and Spaniards 54 votes," German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said in November.

On foreign policy, Britain objects to the title of foreign minister, arguing it suggests there is such a thing as a European super-state.

In a last-minute proposal, Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, the meeting's chairman, suggested EU foreign policy decisions be made by majority voting an idea that Britain eden and others oppose

On defence, France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg want a permanent EU military planning commission and command group based at NATO (news - web sites)'s military headquarters

near the southern Belgian city of Mons. EU military planners would draw on NATO's transport planes, satellite intelligence and communications network for peacekeeping missions.

Washington has been critical of plans to launch a separate EU military planning cell, saying it risked undermining NATO unity and would waste scarce resources by duplicating existing alliance facilities.

Negotiators have still not determined whether to mention God or Europe's Christian heritage in the charter. The 10 states joining the EU in May are

Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta and the Czech Republic.

Hillary wants

move to boost the flagging morale of a US military facing mounting casualties at the hands of a deepening guerrilla insurgency nearly eight months after the overthrow of former Iragi President Saddam Hussein. The Bush and Clinton visits also

come as senior Iraqi officials on the US-backed Governing Council struggle to define terms of an agreement for the handover of sovereignty to Clinton said the United Nations --

which pulled all but a handful of foreign staff from Iraq after the August bombing of its Baghdad headquarters -- could still play a role in administering Iraq, easing the burden on the United States. "We're in a very difficult political

situation, trying to expedite a process for self-governance that will be very challenging," she said. "It's no longer sufficient for our military to win battles, but they have

to win the hearts and minds. It's a very big challenge," Clinton said In an interview Friday in the French newspaper Liberation Secretary of State Colin Powell also called on the United Nations to play an active role in Iraq, notably in setting out the timetable and

arrangements for restoring self-rule. The head of the Governing Council, Jalal Talabani, said on Thursday a roadmap for transferring power to Iraqis would need to address the concerns of the country's top Shiite Muslim religious authority, which has said the current plan sidelines Iraqis and gives short shrift

Shiite Muslims, who make up 60 percent of Iraq's population, hope to play the lead role in a future government and their support would be crucial to the success of a proposed of power to Iraqis by the transfer

Clinton and Reed arrived from Afghanistan, where Thursday she met Afghan President Hamid Karzai as well as troops from the 11,500strong foreign force in Afghanistan pursuing remnants of the Taliban and allied Islamic militants, including al-Qaeda.

Teenage girl's

Kader disclosed the identity of the three other killers in his statement They are Halim, Ledaiya and Anam, who belong to the same locality, the IO said. The IO added that a hunt wasÊon to nab the three killers.

e three and him waylaid Poppy i the toilet outside her house, gagged her with her scurfÊand dragged her to a paddy field to gang-rapeÊÊÊher. As Poppy identified and resisted

According to Kader's statement,

them, they stabbed her in the abdomen. The killers stabbed her again and again till she died on the paddy field. Sources believe that Poppy was

killedÊallegedly after being raped and

that the killed might have something to do with her love affair with one Mahbub. Poppy later ditched Mahbub and her engagement with someone else was supposed to be held on November

28, local sources said. The IO could not

Great apes in danger

The great ages share more than 96 nercent of their DNA with humans

"If we can't save these species which

are so close to us ... do we have very much hope with some of the other particularly threatened species and ecosystems?" Hepworth said. Today, there are believed to be about 400,000 great apes in Africa and Asia,

compared to many million in the 19th

century, the UN says. Each of the species is at "high risk" of extinction, some soon, others within 50 years, organisers said. "The writing is very much on the wall: We have within the next 15 to 20 vears to halt that decline," said Ian Redmond, head of the technical support team for the UN's Great Apes Survival

In Senegal, there are only 200-400 chimpanzees left in the wild. In Ghana, there are 300-500 left, and Guinea Bissau has fewer than 200. Research shows that chimpanzee populations have already disappeared from Benin, Gambia and

Because the apes live in such remote areas, their habitats are often hard to map. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation is working with the European Space Agency to use satellites or remote sensing to track where ape habitats are being destroyed.

At the meeting, UNEP and UNESCO out together a plan on how countries can protect their apes. Among the suggestions was giving law enforcement more resources to prevent smuggling.

The agencies are also encouraging countries to think about ways in which apes are an asset. Uganda and Rwanda have made apes the centre of their tourism industries. Travellers pay about \$100 for a daylong guided walking tour to see chimps a small fortune in impoverished countries.

Apes tend the forests by spreading seeds and pruning branches. Along with elephants, they are the "gardeners of the forests," Redmond said.

Palestinian PM

"We don't want any meetings for the

sake of meetings," Qurie said. "We welcome the meeting with Mr Sharon but we reiterate again there will be no meeting without prior preparation and there will be no meeting if the

The road map calls for reciprocal steps such as a halt to Jewish settlement construction and the dismantling of Palestinian militant groups as part of a course it charts toward the establishment of a Palestinian state in 2005.

outstanding issues are not resolved." he

in their meeting in Amman that the United States must get involved in reviving stalled peace negotiations "energetically" and "directly. Burns is expected to meet Sharon in

Qurie also said he would tell Burns

Jerusalem on Sunday, Israel Radio

to improve governance. Chowdhury also plans to visit the presidents to assist the president and three deputy prime ministers to assist Disclosing Chowdhury's plans, a