

BRIEFLY

Albright to visit Kosovo July 29:

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will visit Kosovo in a week to assess the situation there after the deployment of NATO peacekeepers, the State Department announced Thursday. AFP reports from Washington.

Albright will meet with leaders of the NATO-led Kosovo force (KFOR) and officials of the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK), the State Department said in a statement.

Quakes hit northern Japan: An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 4.6 was among four moderate tremors that struck off Japan's northern coast early Friday, the Meteorological Agency said. AP reports from Tokyo.

Local police said there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries from the quakes, which had virtually the same epicenter and occurred within a two-hour period.

Clinton telephones Barak:

President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak will telephone on Thursday ahead of weekend meetings Barak will have with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Reuters reports from Washington.

P J Crowley, a spokesman for the White House National Security Council, said the two leaders spoke for 10 minutes in a phone call that Barak initiated from Israel.

Barak to ask Arafat for changes in Wye accord

JERUSALEM, July 23: Prime Minister Ehud Barak will ask for changes in the interim Wye River peace agreement when he meets with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat late Saturday, Barak's top security adviser said, reports AP.

Arafat has rejected such an idea up to now, demanding that the Wye agreement be implemented in full and according to its original three-month timeframe.

Under Wye, Israel was to withdraw from 13.1 per cent of the West Bank in three stages between November 1998 and January 1999. Barak's hard-line predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, suspended the accord after the first pullback, charging the Palestinians had reneged on their security commitments.

Barak has said he would resume implementation, but would like to fold parts of Wye into negotiations on a final

peace agreement. Barak feels that implementing the third stage of Wye would unnecessarily delay talks on a peace treaty.

The Palestinians want to control as much West Bank land as possible before heading into so-called final status negotiations. Once Wye is implemented in full, they would have full or partial control of 40 per cent of the land.

Barak's security adviser, Danny Yatom, told Israel TV's Channel Two on Friday that Barak would suggest in his meeting with Arafat to combine the last part of the Wye accord with talks on a final peace treaty "to increase the chances of arriving at a permanent solution." The Wye accord "is not the final goal," he said.

Barak has said he would implement Wye fully if Arafat does not agree to the changes.

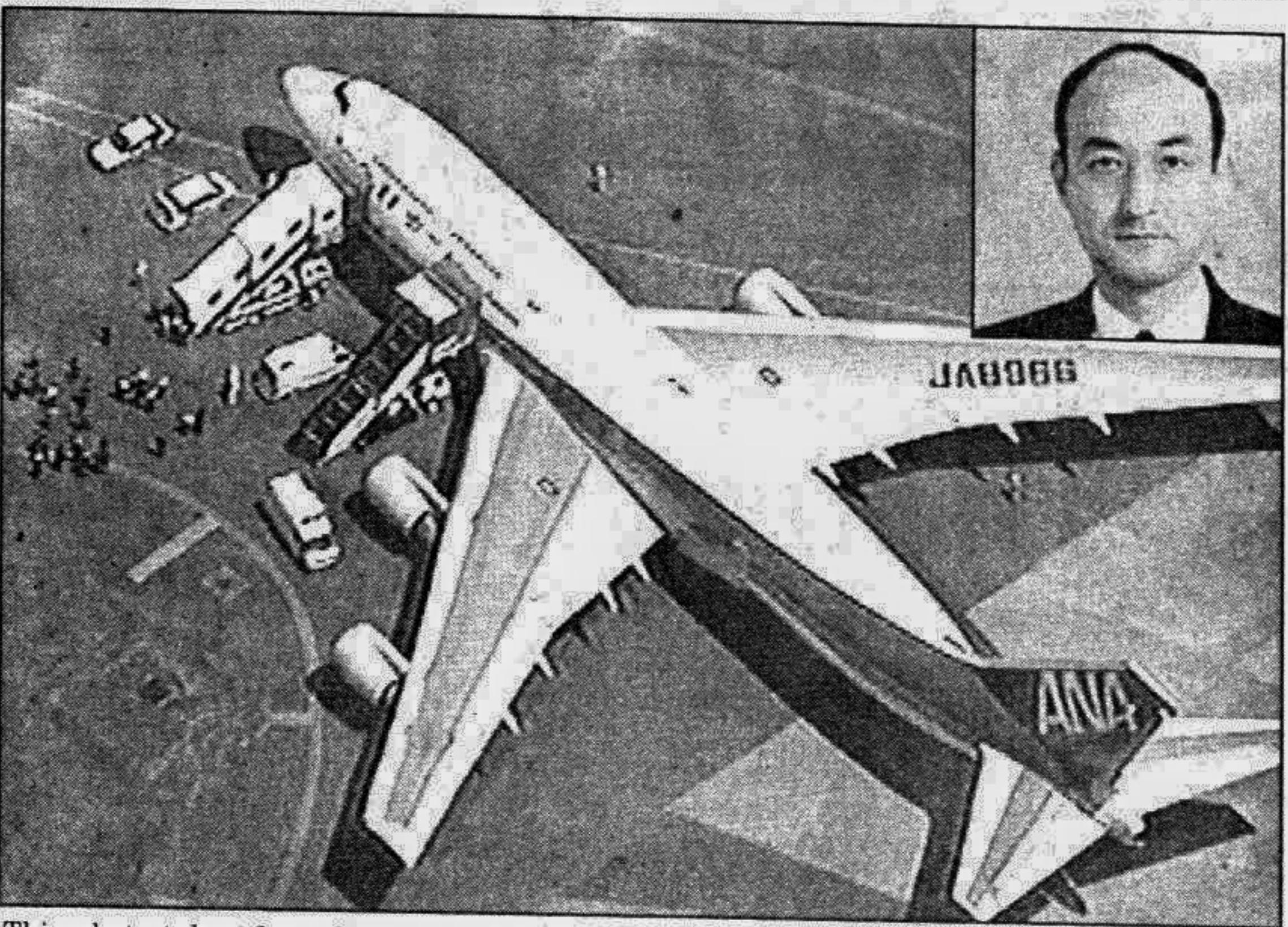
The Barak-Arafat meeting will be their second since Barak took office July 6. Barak re-

turned from talks in Washington and London on Tuesday. He plans to fly to Egypt on Sunday to meet President Hosni Mubarak. Yatom said Barak would also see Jordan's King Abdullah II soon. He met the three leaders before leaving for Washington.

Barak has set a goal of completing peace talks with the Palestinians and Syria within 15 months, restarting a process frozen under Netanyahu. Barak defeated Netanyahu in the May 17 election.

Addressing Cabinet ministers from his One Israel party, Barak warned that peace negotiations would be difficult. He said the process would not be a walk in the park, but rather, rafting down the Colorado River, Israel radio reported.

Barak also complained about statements from ministers about releasing Palestinian prisoners.



This photo taken from Japanese television shows a hijacked Boeing 747-400 of Japan's All Nippon Airways Co. Ltd (ANA), carrying 503 passengers and 14 crew, sitting on a runway just after it landed at Naha Airport in Tokyo yesterday. The pilot (inset) was stabbed to death while overpowering a knife-wielding hijacker. Story on Page 1 — AFP photo

Serbian opposition united to oust Milosevic

VIENNA, July 23: Serbian opposition parties today urged international financial help for the democratic cities of Serbia and said they were sufficiently united to oust Slobodan Milosevic by the autumn, reports Reuters.

"We have agreed to coordinate our street demonstrations and I believe that the last bloody dictatorship of this century could be destroyed by the autumn," Nenad Canak, head of the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, told reporters.

"If he (Milosevic) remains any longer he will stand on his feet again and all our efforts will be useless. In November, the one who will have a loaf of bread and a finger on electricity will rule Serbia," Canak said during a two-day meeting of European socialist leaders in Vienna.

Opposition attempts to remove Milosevic have been hampered by infighting be-

tween the 30-party Alliance for Change movement and the Serbian Renewal Movement of former Yugoslav Deputy Prime Minister Vuk Draskovic.

Vuk Obradovic, president of the Socialist Democratic Party—an Alliance for Change member—said the opposition would continue to hold two or three street protests per week, moving closer to Belgrade as long as Milosevic remained in power.

He said the opposition wanted Serbian President Milan Mihailovic, as well as Milosevic, to resign. An interim government of technocrats should then be installed.

The new government would be charged with arranging democratic elections in Serbia and Yugoslavia within a year.

"We have not talked about leaders of the new government yet but we at the Alliance for Change believe Dragoslav Avramovic could be a unifying personality," Obradovic said.

Indian politician, 7 Islamic militants killed in Kashmir

Border to be manned 24-hour: Fernandes

SRINAGAR, India, July 23: An Indian opposition activist and seven Islamic mercenaries were killed Thursday in the troubled Himalayan state of Kashmir, the police said, reports AFP.

Habibullah Wani, a local Muslim leader of India's main opposition Congress party, was shot dead following a major police search operation through a forest in bandipur district, some 60 kilometre north of Srinagar.

More than 24,000 people have died in a Muslim separatist drive raging since 1989 in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state.

Meanwhile, Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes on

Thursday said the disputed Kashmir border with Pakistan would be manned round the year along with electronic surveillance to prevent another conflict.

Fernandes told the Press Trust of India after a trip to Kashmir, where Indian troops and Pakistan-backed guerrillas fought for 10 weeks after hundreds of intruders occupied key Indian peaks, that the frontier would be manned all the time.

Of course, the (border) needs to be manned round the year. We must take quick steps to make the entire area secure as Pakistan has demonstrated its betrayal of trust," he said.

"A comprehensive plan is expected to be finalised in the next two months for permanent manning of the Line of Control (the official name of the border) and surveillance through satellites and electronic gadgets," he said.

Fernandes conceded that the latest conflict in Kashmir, which follows three Indo-Pakistani wars, was almost a "full-scale" battle.

"We came close to a full-scale war but the other side was aware that another adventure would be giving them a bloody nose," he said.

The minister said vast stretches of the border were unmanned since the last India-Pakistan war in 1971.

The nationality of the dead was not immediately known. Many Islamic guerrillas from Pakistan and Afghanistan are known to be fighting on the side

of local militants in Kashmir.

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