

Israel, Palestine begin landmark negotiations

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Facing tight deadlines and the threat of renewed violence, Israel and the Palestinians yesterday began historic talks on a final peace treaty — their fourth attempt since 1996.

After a 75-minute meeting at a West Bank hotel, both sides said they were confident they would meet their ambitious timetable — a

framework agreement by February and a final accord ironing out their remaining land and policy disputes by September. President Clinton has offered to host a Mideast summit in the final stretch of the framework negotiations.

The talks were overshadowed by a bomb attack Sunday that injured 33 Israelis in the coastal resort of Netanya. No group has

claimed responsibility, but police suspect Arab villagers from the area. Israeli security officials have warned that militants would step up attacks as the peace process gains momentum.

The chief negotiators, Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo and Israeli diplomat Oded Eran, repeatedly shook hands at the request of photographers.

Japan criticizes cell research

TOKYO (AP) — The Japanese government yesterday criticized the ethics of a researcher at a Tokyo university who combined a human cell with a cow's egg — a procedure officials said was too similar to cloning.

Setsuo Iwasaki, a professor at

the Tokyo University of Agriculture, defended the research, related to cloning and studying leukemia blood cells.

He warned Japan would be behind the United States and other Western nations in the search on cells.

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