

# Turks flee homes fearing fresh earthquake

BURSA, Turkey, Aug 20: Millions of Turks, fearing tremors signalled another disaster, camped under the stars today while the death toll in the 72 hours since an earthquake rocked the country topped 7,000, reports Reuter.

People abandoned their homes on a hot and muggy night on the recommendation of the country's chief earthquake expert.

They crowded into every grassy spot of Bursa, the country's textile capital perceived by experts as the likeliest place to be shaken by a second quake.

"Everyone is very nervous," said Hasan Mutlu, a factory worker in his 40s, who curled up for the night with his dog Blackeyes in the main square of the province of two million.

"We've all seen the news and we don't want to end up the same," said Mutlu, his wife having left to stay with relatives.

The chief of Turkey's main earthquake observatory

Mehmet Ali Isikara, said a series of tremors was reason enough for people to leave their homes for 24 hours for fear the buildings would collapse in a repeat disaster.

Hours later, after meeting other experts, Isikara revised his forecast and said he no longer expected a second quake.

But hedging his bets, he told a television interviewer: "If it was up to me, I would still stay outside."

Rescuers have been trying frantically to save thousands of people trapped in the rubble of their homes since Tuesday's earthquake rocked the industrial northwest while most lay asleep. The quake measured 7.4 on the Richter scale.

The death toll, the highest of any earthquake in Turkey for years, climbed to 7,085 at 2245 GMT on Thursday with more than 33,000 people injured.

The Bursa governor's office said the grounds of schools and

other public buildings had been opened along with the Ataturk Stadium "for our citizens to spend the night safe and sound."

Officials estimated about 60 per cent of the city was on the street.

Governors of other provinces issued similar orders. Residents bedded down in the disaster area, including in Istanbul, the country's commercial center.

They came armed with mattresses, pillows, blankets, deck chairs and flasks of coffee.

At Akinilar air base near the capital city Ankara, residents of lodgings apartments were also evacuated, an officer at the base said.

In Bursa, people staked their claims to park benches on a first-come, first-served basis. A man placed his television in the window of his flat while sitting out on the pavement watching the news with a remote control in his hand.

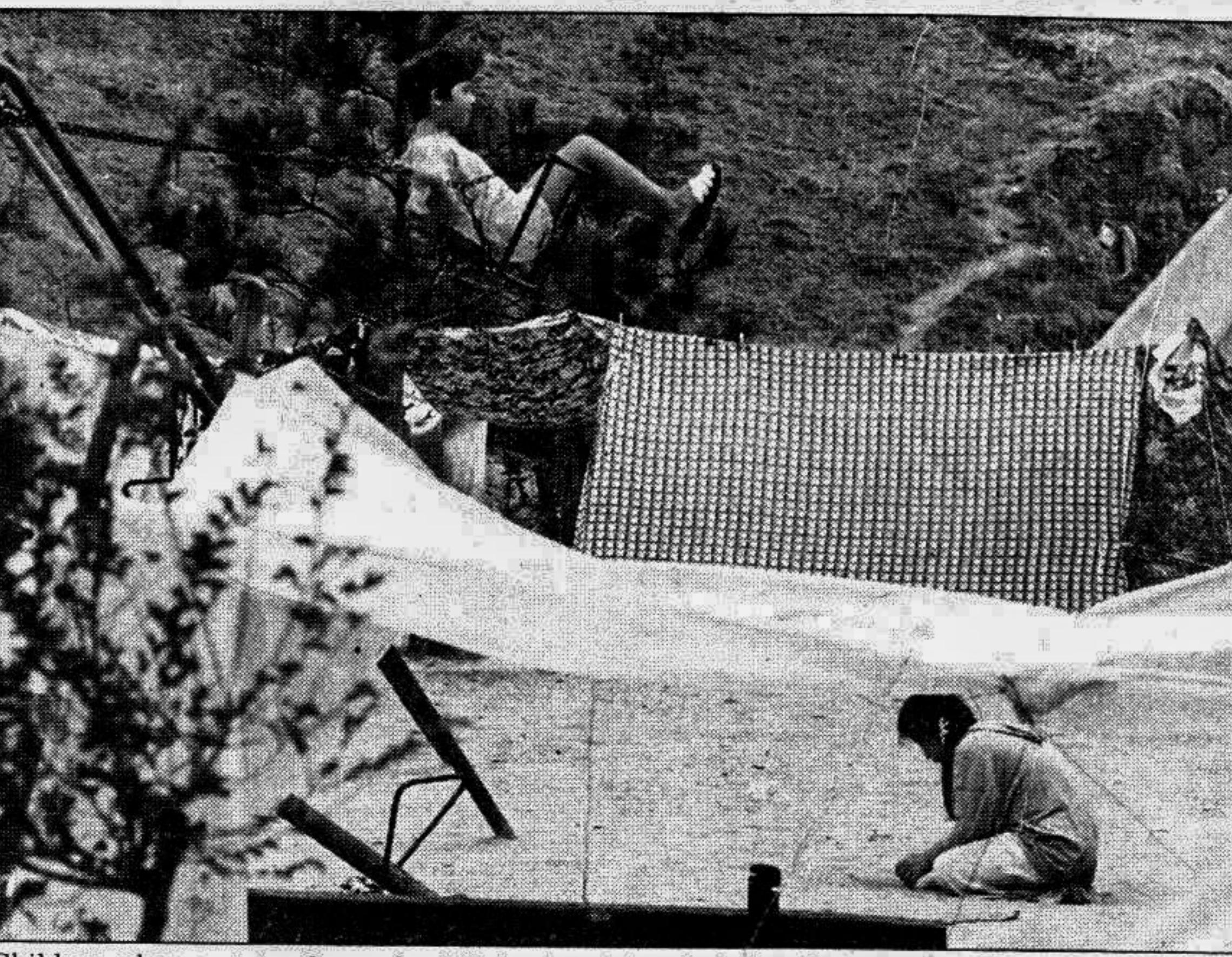
Another report says: death toll in the devastating earthquake that struck Turkey this week could go as high as 40,000 people, UN official for humanitarian affairs, Sergio Piazzli, said Friday, reports AFP.

"It is a possibility," Piazzli, who is head of the regional office for European humanitarian affairs, said when questioned if the number of dead could rise to such a figure.

The Turkish government crisis centre in Ankara said early Friday that the death toll was now at 7,085 people with another 33,559 injured, but a government spokesman said the toll was expected to rise much higher.

Piazzli said he based the projection on Turkish estimates that some 35,000 people were still trapped under rubble, alive or dead.

"There is still a very high chance of finding survivors" to Monday or Tuesday next week, he said.



Children play next to the makeshift tents set by their families near Istanbul Friday after the earthquake that hit Turkey on Tuesday killing more than 7,000 and injuring more than 33,000. Turkey's top seismologist warned the public on Thursday in Turkey's quake-hit northwest to be on alert as the region could be hit by an increasing number of aftershocks.

— AFP photo



Led by children, in either Albanian flags or small UCK uniforms, a group of some thousands of people join a march in Pec Thursday. They were carrying Albanian and American flags and posters reading "Release the prisoners, Release my father, Viva NATO" demanding to release Albanian prisoners from Serbian prisons.

— AFP photo

## BRIEFLY

### Nigeria to cut size of military:

Nigeria plans to cut the size of its military by more than a third to 50,000 troops over the next 10 years or more, a defence ministry spokesman said Thursday, AP reports from Abuja.

Col. Godwin Ugbu said soldiers would not be laid off and the cuts would be made mainly through the retirement of armed forces staff with 35 or more years of service.

### Clinton celebrates birthday:

President Bill Clinton spent his 53rd birthday on Thursday criticising the impact of Republican tax cuts on education and receiving best wishes from Russian President Boris Yeltsin before starting a family vacation, Reuters reports from Washington.

Moments after Education Secretary Richard Riley wished Clinton happy birthday in introducing him to a group of educators gathered at the White House, the president renewed his vow to veto a Republican tax cut approved by Congress.

### 3 die in brawl in Indonesia:

At least three people were killed and seven injured in a mass brawl on a remote island in strife-torn Maluku province, police said Friday, AP reports from Jakarta.

Lt. Col. Didiuk, chief of North Maluku police, said about 50 people have been interrogated in connection with the inter-village fighting on Halmahera Island, about 2,500 kilometers (1,560 miles) northeast of Jakarta.

### Gaddafi for unity of African states:

Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi in an interview published Friday urged African nations to put aside their differences and create a "United States of Africa," AP reports from Paris.

"I want to create a new Africa," Gaddafi told the French daily Le Figaro, saying that the jumble of nations on the African continent could not survive economically unless they united.

## South Asia moves to ban land mines

WADDUWA, Sri Lanka, Aug 20: South Asian military officials and diplomats agreed Friday to adopt "incremental steps" to ban land mines while recognising problems posed by tension between India and Pakistan, reports AFP.

Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have agreed to consider it later.

Discussions indicated that most countries in the region support the eventual elimination of anti-personnel mines and appropriate steps towards this goal, said a report following the seminar.

ICRC's Peter Herby said India and Pakistan had shown "great willingness" to eventually eliminate their anti-personnel mines but ongoing problems along their border remained an early ban.

The three-day conference organised by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ended with a call for bilateral deals to eliminate the use of mines along peaceful borders in the region.

The organisers said India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan could agree not to deploy mines along their common borders and such moves would be a sign of a regional willingness to move towards a total ban.

They were in a position to immediately give up the use of mines because of ongoing disputes.

He said neither country felt they were in a position to move towards a total ban.

Out of the seven South Asian

countries, only Bangladesh and the Maldives signed the Ottawa treaty.

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