

Japan expected to suffer more severe earthquake in near future

□ An A&M earthquake specialist says the Kobe earthquake is not the "big one."

By Lynn Cook
THE BATTALION

Scientists are speculating that the earthquake in Japan three days ago may only be a prelude to a stronger earthquake.

Dr. Sungat Altis, Texas A&M specialist in deformation of the earth's crust in and around the Japanese islands, said he is leaving in a month to study the causes and effects of the earthquake through satellite data at the Earthquake Research Institute of the University of Tokyo.

Altis said the recent earthquake, measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale, was not the "big one."

The earthquake in Kobe was on one of the many small faults that cover Japan, but a massive earthquake is expected along the fault formed by the Eurasian and

Phillipine Sea plates, which runs adjacent to Japan, Altis said.

The Phillipine Sea plate is moving six or seven centimeters per year, pushing its way under the Eurasian plate and creating a large interplate fault.

The western half of this fault, which runs to the outskirts of Tokyo is expected to rupture and measure at least 8.0 on the Richter scale.

"An earthquake took place south of the current earthquake in 1946, but that one did not rupture the entire fault," Altis said. "So with the Kobe earthquake, we are hypothesizing that the portion of the fault that did not move earlier could move now."

Altis said the stress on the other part of the fault was expected to result in the "big earthquake" almost thirty years ago. The recent earthquake in Kobe could be a precursor to the "big earthquake," he said.

Records indicate that previous seismic activity has ruptured the entire fault, Altis said.

However, in the latest earthquake, only half of the fault was ruptured. Scientists expect the other half to move, creating another great quake, he said.

The large interplate fault runs

directly to the western outskirts of Tokyo. Downtown Tokyo is about 25 miles away from the end of the fault, but Altis said this is not enough distance to save the city from suffering massive damages.

According to the Houston Chronicle, Masakazu Ozaki, a professor of architectural engineering at Chiba University, said a revision of Japan's building codes will be inevitable.

Although more than 20,000 buildings in Kobe were damaged in the recent earthquake, about 90 percent of those were old buildings that did not meet the new standards, Altis said.

Structures in Japan are either built to allow buildings to sway or are made strong so the structure will not shake at all, Altis said.

More stringent standards should be set to prepare Japan's cities for large earthquakes, Altis said. Although Japan's building codes were last updated in the 1970s, Altis said he thinks they need to go back to the drawing board.

"The building codes were revised in the 1970s, but they do not appear to be sufficient to withstand a large earthquake such as the one in Kobe," Altis said.

Quake sparks concern for family, friends

By Lynn Cook
THE BATTALION

Many Japanese A&M students are concerned about the safety of their friends and relatives still in Japan after the devastating earthquake that has left more than 4,000 dead.

Residents of Kobe, the port city that was hardest hit, stand in lines to receive small portions of food and water and to identify the dead.

Yuichi Kobayashi, president of the Japanese Student Association, said that no A&M students are from Kobe, but some have friends and family in and near the city.

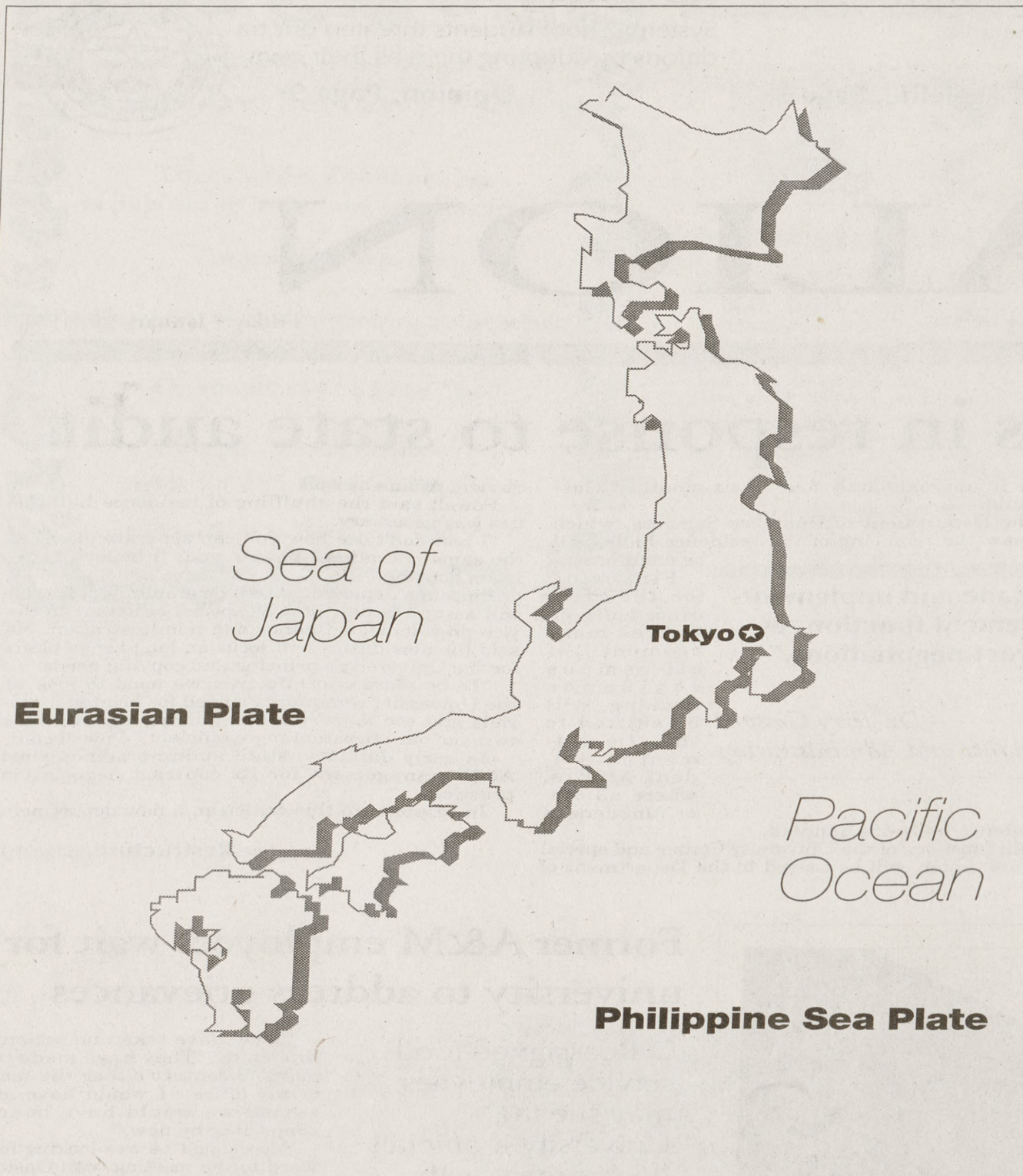
"I called a friend living in Kobe and she said they are living like refugees," Kobayashi said. "They have no electricity and no water. The only information source they have is the radio."

According to the Office of International Studies, A&M has 155 Japanese students studying here

this year, many of whom are exchange students from the now closed Koriyama A&M campus.

Exchange student Miyuki Watanabe's family lives in a small town outside of Kobe. After hearing the news the morning after the earthquake, Watanabe was able to reach her family by telephone.

"My family is OK," Watanabe said. "Japan has many earthquakes, but I always worry about my family."



Mark Smith/THE BATTALION

New plans available for loan repayment

By Jason Zachary
SPECIAL TO THE BATTALION

If you are like many students, you have managed to accumulate a sizable student loan debt.

A sizable portion of a student's loan is the interest that accrues while the student is in school or in the process of paying the loan. Often by setting up an advantageous payment plan, you can reduce your student loan in the long run.

This month, the federal government will unveil three new repayment plans to help students. In addition to the standard repayment plan, which calls for borrowers to make

equal monthly payments for 10 years, both new borrowers and those wishing to refinance existing loans will be able to pick one of these options:

- Extended repayment permits borrowers to select a term of 12 to 30 years with fixed monthly payments. Longer terms will appeal to recent graduates who want to keep their monthly payments low.

- Graduated repayment offers lower initial payments that escalates every few years over a 12- to 30-year period. It is best for heavily indebted graduates in fields that offer low starting salaries.

- Income-contingent repayment permits payments to rise or fall annually in accordance with the borrower's income. It is suited for those who want to enter public service or other low-paying fields.

But remember, stretching the term will significantly increase the total interest costs. For instance, paying off an \$18,000 loan at eight percent over 15 years rather than 10 would add \$4,715 in interest to the total bill.

Details on the above programs will be available after Jan. 31 at the Department of Education (800-455-5889.)

Economic Outlook

Prime Rate
8.5%

Discount Rate
4.75%

Federal Funds Rate
5.72%

3-month T-Bill
5.62%

30-year T-Bond
7.76%

Car Loans
8.7%

Credit Cards
17.9%

P/E Ratio
16.9%

Dividend Yield
2.76%

Texas A&M student may begin training guide dogs on campus

□ Dogs may be moving into the residence halls.

By Wes Swift
THE BATTALION

On-campus residents may have the opportunity to train seeing-eye dogs if a bill passed Thursday by the Residence Hall Association is approved.

The bill, sponsored by Jesse Czeluta, Daniel Ceballos, and Jenny Escamilla, proposed that residence halls participate in program sponsored by the Southwest Guide Dog Foundation that lets a puppy live with a resident while it is trained to be a guide for the blind.

Jesse Czeluta, a resident of Fowler hall, said he has been training guide dogs since he was 12. He says that seeing eye dogs help the blind live easier lives.

"Guide dogs provide blind persons with enhanced mobility and greater independence," Czeluta said. "And that makes more pro-

ductive citizens."

Czeluta said that training one guide dog takes hundreds of people, labor hours, and dollars.

He said one blind student at A&M had to go to California to get a dog because of the lack of trained guide dogs in the area.

According to the bill, the puppy would live with the resident. The resident would take the puppy to classes, and would be with it 24 hours a day.

Czeluta said the dog would not pose that much of a problem to dorm life.

"I've talked to my roommate and suite mates, and they had no problems," Czeluta said. "I've talked to my professors, and some say 'What?', and others say 'Yeah, I like that, but they all support the program.'"

The bill requires that the program be subject to the scrutiny of the department of Residence Life and Housing, who may discontinue the program if they see fit. The program also requires that the dogs be held to strict hygiene standards and regular

veterinary exams.

Ken Niederhofer, resident director at Fowler hall, said the proximity of a first-rate veterinary center adds to the attractiveness of the program.

"If there is a problem, we can haul the dog over to the vet center and take care of it," Niederhofer said.

He also said that the veterinary center has volunteered to waive medical fees for the dogs.

The bill was passed unexpectedly through emergency legislation by a unanimous vote.

Czeluta said he was surprised by the vote.

"I didn't expect it," Czeluta said. "There's been some hesitancy from the administration, but with support from RHA, and the support is overwhelming, it should pass easily."

While Czeluta was surprised, Jenny Escamilla, vice president of Hughes hall, was not.

"I've talked to people in the Keathley-Hughes-Fowler complex, and I've had no people refuse," Escamilla said.

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