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Inside Today

Article

Choosing a Vice-Chancellor
 Column: Passing Clouds
 by Zillur Rahman Siddiqui
 Page 4

International

Israel begins arresting Jewish extremists
 Page 5

Spy row: Republicans blast Clinton's policies on Russia
 Page 5

Business

Foreign investors upbeat about prospects of Dhaka stock market
 Beijing moving faster to combat inflation
 Pages 6, 7

Environment

Teaching the Scouts How to Do it: After War, Battle for the Trees has Begun; Rice Fields also Contribute to Global Warming; Kenyans Seek Killer in Dying Park
 Page 8

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day

Tomorrow

The Daily Star looks into the development work of another non-governmental organisation — PROSHIKA. Read the 2-page special to be published tomorrow.

NEWS BRIEFS

Mostafiz leaves for Tokyo Mar 5
 Foreign Minister ASM Mostafiz Rahman is expected to leave for Tokyo on March 5. Officials said Mostafiz's trip is to prepare grounds for talks of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia who undertakes a 5-day official visit to Japan from March 28. The Prime Minister's special envoy Morshed Khan is likely to accompany the Foreign Minister during his 4-day visit, reports UNB.

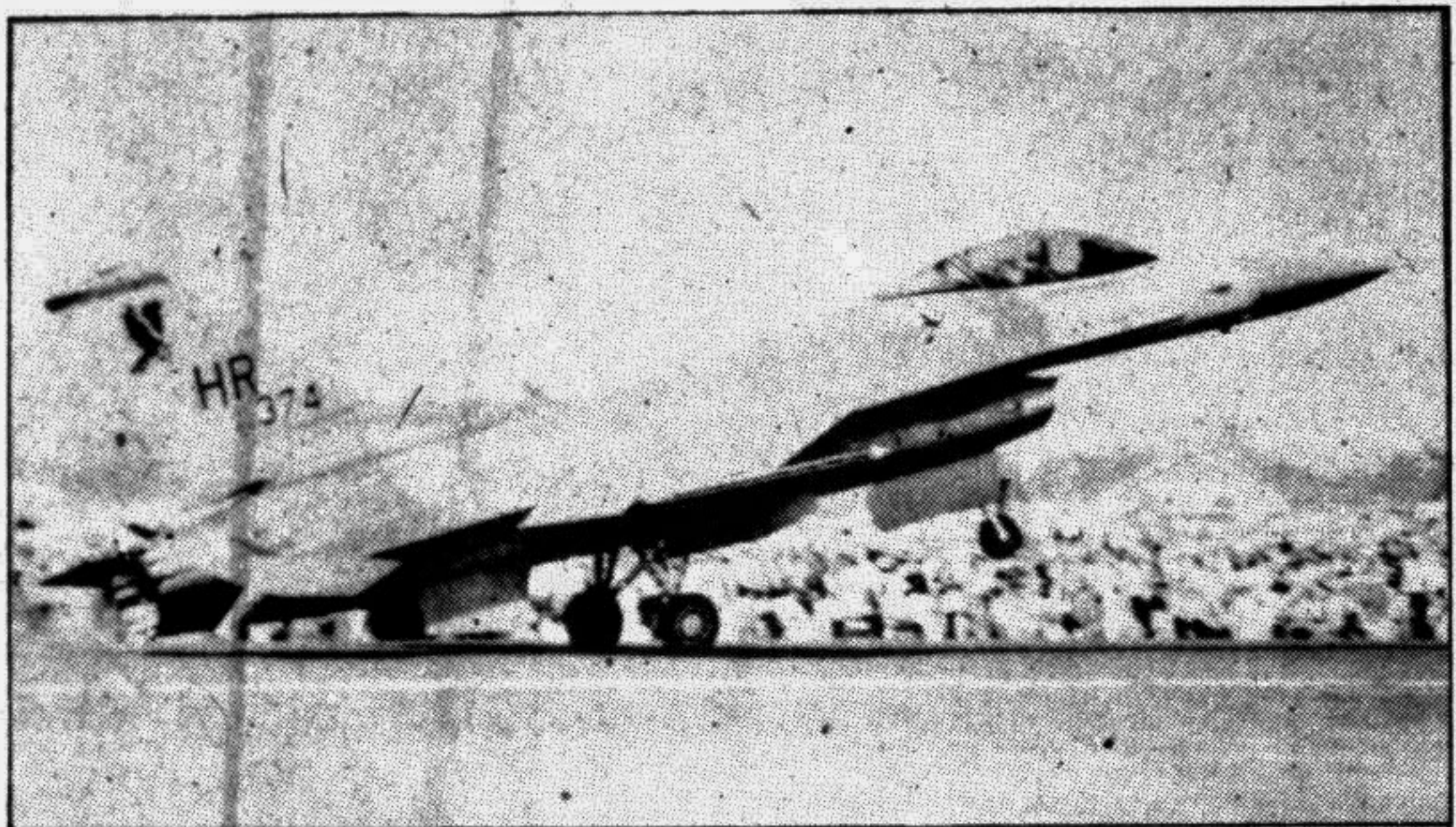
2 BCL leaders freed
 Two pro-Awami League Chhatra League leaders were released yesterday from Dhaka Central Jail after several months of detention. Manjurul Islam Ashru, president of Dhaka city unit (south), and Nurunnabi Chowdhury Shawon, vice president of Dhaka city unit (north) were released in the afternoon. Campus sources said Ashru had been arrested on October 25 while Shawon on December 4 last year under the Anti-Terrorism Act, reports UNB.

Appointments
 By Staff Correspondent
 Additional Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division Shaiful Islam has been appointed the Chairman of the Bangladesh Rayon Board, according to a government handout. The Divisional Chief of the Planning Commission Omar Hadi has been appointed the Chairman of the Chittagong Port Authority.

Sehri, Iftar timings

Ratna	Mar	Sehri	Iftar
17	1	—	6:05 pm
18	2	5:00 am	6:05 pm
19	3	5:00 am	6:06 pm

NATO fighters down four Serb jets over Bosnia



The file photo of a US airforce F-16 fighter, two of which downed four Serbian fighter aircraft near Banja Luka in northwestern Bosnia yesterday. — AFP

BELGRADE, Feb 28: Two American F-16 fighter jets today shot down four Bosnian Serb aircraft that violated the UN no-fly zone over Bosnia. NATO said the planes apparently dropped bombs, reports AP.

It was the first time that warplanes flying under NATO command have fired on planes since the no-fly zone was declared in October 1992. It also marked the first offensive military action by the alliance in its 44-year history.

US Adm Jeremy M Boorda, the NATO commander in southern Europe, said the American pilots saw the planes make "bombing maneuvers" and then witnessed explosions on the ground. One US plane then shot down three planes and a second downed a fourth. Boorda said in Naples, Italy. Two other planes escaped. None of the American crew

Opposition stages walkout Speaker's 'no' to debate on corruptions

By Staff Correspondent

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali in his ruling yesterday rejected the demand for a general debate on corruptions.

The Speaker, while turning down the common demand by the treasury and the opposition benches, observed that the parties concerned had failed to come out with specific charges.

"Putting forward specific charges were legal and conventional preconditions for a debate", Ali in favour of his ruling said.

The opposition members, led by leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina, walked out in protest against the speaker's refusal to allow the House to have a general discussion on the issue.

Earlier, while reading out his 12-page printed ruling the Speaker also rejected the adjournment motions seeking a discussion on the alleged corruptions of the cabinet ministers. Razzak Ali said, the opposition MPs had also failed to submit to him the required documents substantiating the allegations.

Razzak Ali in support of his ruling referred to a large number of authors, including Kaul and May, who had theoretically dealt with such issues in their books on parliamentary practices.

The speaker also referred to some precedences of the House.

Parliament secretariat bill placed

A bill seeking a separate secretariat for the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) was introduced in Parliament yesterday amidst thumping of tables from both sides of the House, reports UNB.

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia, who piloted the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat Bill 1994, said it aimed at fulfilling the constitutional obligation of the government. He referred to Article 79 of the Constitution which stipulates a separate secretariat for parliament with powers of regulatory control for independent and better functioning.

The bill, expected to have smooth sail, will free the parliament secretariat, manned by about 460 officers and employees, from the control of the Bangladesh Secretariat and the Accountant General in matters of administration and money.

It proposed a Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat Commission comprising the Speaker as Chairman and the Prime Minister, See Page 12 Col 1

DUCSU polls 'test of strength' for BNP, AL

By Nazmul Ashraf

With the electoral battle in the four cities over, two top political parties—the ruling BNP and the main opposition Awami League — are now preparing to test their popularity in Dhaka University, the hot-bed of democracy.

This time, the two parties are expected to concentrate on the forthcoming elections to the DUCSU (Dhaka University Central Students Union) that has a long tradition of leading the nation's major political upheavals during the pre and post liberation period, according to political observers.

Political analysts predict, for BNP, the DUCSU polls, scheduled for April 12, will appear to be another challenge — to win the confidence of nearly 30,000 students of DU, the highest seat of learning of the country.

Both the parties are learnt to have taken up the polls very seriously since the outcome of the elections are considered to have tremendous impact on the national politics.

Although the polls will be contested by the student chapters of the political parties, the major parties especially the BNP and the AL, are planning to put in their best efforts to back up their respective student activists who will be in the electoral race.

Party stalwarts of the BNP as well as the AL are likely to meet separately after the Eid-ul-Fitr to discuss the DUCSU polls and chalk out strategies for their respective student fronts and also to consolidate their organisational strength. A number of leaders of the two

Rohingyas leave in big numbers very soon

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 28: Myanmar has assured that rest of the Rohingya refugees, sheltered in Bangladesh, would be repatriated in big numbers very soon, reports UNB.

The slow-pace repatriation of the Muslim minority nationals of Myanmar will be geared up after setting up of an office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Rakhaine, a Muslim-populated state. Myanmar officials told the Bangladesh delegation at a two-day meeting that concluded on Sunday at Sittwe, the capital of Arakan.

UNCHR will start functioning there very soon, they said, giving clearance to 11,382 more refugees to return home.

The Bangladesh delegation leader, Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Omar Faruq, disclosed the outcome of the

Cabinet okays book policy, 5 medical colleges

The cabinet yesterday approved the proposal for establishing five medical colleges at Dinajpur, Bogra, Khulna, Faridpur and Comilla, reports UNB.

The cabinet also approved the "National Book Policy 1994" at its regular weekly meeting held at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

Ministers, State Ministers in charge of different ministries, Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and Secretaries concerned were present in the meeting.

After the cabinet meeting, an analytical presentation of various aspects of the recently concluded GATT Agreement was presented by the Commerce Ministry in presence of the Prime Minister and cabinet members.

We have sufficient documents: Hasina

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday claimed that they had got sufficient documents and evidence to prove corruption charges against BNP Ministers, reports UNB.

"We wanted to produce those in the House during the proposed debate on corruption," she told newsmen after leading a walkout against speaker's ruling that rejected discussion on the alleged corruptions.

Hasina, flanked by her party's senior colleagues and leaders of different opposition groups, said it was the ruling party which proposed a debate on corruption and the opposition welcomed it. Both the sides requested the Speaker to set a date for it.

"But now they (BNP) have backed out from their previous stand," she said, adding "We have staged walkout in protest against the rejection of discussion on corruption."

The Opposition Leader said they had extended all cooperation to the government to institutionalise democracy and ensure development. "But we can't cooperate with it in corruption, politicisation and terrorism."

"The country has nosedived in stagnation. Different ministries, especially the Energy Ministry, has become a den of corruption. Some 210 officers remain OSD. I can't understand how BNP runs the country," questioned the Awami League President.

Abdus Samad Azad, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Anwar Hossain Manju and Manirul Haq Chowdhury were present at the briefing.

BSS adds: Sheikh Hasina said that the government had

Opposition trying to promote 'jungle law,' says Talukder

BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder yesterday categorically said that there was no scope for any political party to over-ride the JS rules of Procedure "for wild goose hunting," reports BSS.

Briefing newsmen on the opposition political parties' "unparliamentary behaviour," Talukder said that neither the House nor the Speaker could be subjected to "dictates" of any quarter to serve their "political purpose."

He alleged that the opposition parties in the House were trying to promote "jungle law" and thus wasting the valuable time of the Sangsad. At the same time they were trying to drive at a point to make Parliament ineffective.

Salam Talukder said that during the 14 working days of the current session, the Sang-

News Analysis Devaluation: Too little too late?

By A Special Correspondent

Last Thursday the value of the Taka vis-a-vis the US dollar was adjusted downwards by the Bangladesh Bank. As reported by The Daily Star this was the third time that the external value of the Taka was revised downwards this year.

Although the government has maintained although that the exchange rate of the Taka is managed flexibly, the Taka-Dollar exchange rate has been adjusted only eight times since January 1 1992, when the Secondary Exchange Market (SEM) rate and the official rate were unified.

The Bangladesh Bank manages the exchange rate of the Taka with respect to a basket of ten currencies. The idea is that by moving the Taka-US dollar exchange rate, the real exchange rate of the Taka vis-a-vis the nine other currencies in the basket will be held constant. This will ensure that

constraint of an overvalued Taka much earlier.

Finance Ministry argues that the relative stability of US dollar-Taka exchange rate since the Taka was made convertible on trade account testify that the Taka was not overvalued. Also, successful macro-economic management, specially lowering of inflation rate, helped to compensate for devaluation of currencies of competing countries.

This official position has although been contested by the World Bank. The World Bank has been arguing that low labour productivity and wage increases unrelated to productivity gains have worked to erode the competitiveness of the Bangladeshi currency which needed to be connected through more frequent devaluation.



With the Eid-ul-Fitr drawing nearer, traffic jams have increased manifolds near the city shopping centres. This picture was taken yesterday near the Gausia Market. — Star photo

Prokrichi decides future action today

By Staff Correspondent

The Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council will hold a special meeting at the Krishibid Institution today to formulate its future course of action.

Decisions, to be taken today, will be placed for approval and implementation at a special council session of the council scheduled for March 5.

Earlier on Sunday, a meeting of the action council presided over by Dr M A Majed condemned the government for suspending the order of January 8 that had upgraded the pay scale of 9 BCS cadres and non-cadre services. The Council urged the government to withdraw the suspension order immediately or face consequences.

RMC closed sine die

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Feb 28: Rangpur Medical College was closed sine die today fearing fresh clash between two rival groups of students.

According to college sources Chhatra Dal activists allegedly kidnapped a Chhatra League activist Abdur Rab Ranga and manhandled him. Police rescued him from the town last night. Since then the activists of both the student bodies were locked in a series of clashes.

The college authorities in an emergency meeting of the teachers' council decided to close the college for an indefinite period and asked the students to vacate the hostel by today.

Indian defence budget up

NEW DELHI, Feb 28: Finance Minister Manmohan Singh announced a hike in India's defence spending today in a fiscal 1994-95 budget which appeared to rule out any major purchases of new weapons systems, report agencies.

In a budget 17.4 per cent higher than last year, defence spending will go up to 230 billion rupees (dhs 7.4 billion), about 12 per cent more than its revised estimate of last year's spending. Singh said in his nationally televised address.

The increase comes at a time of heightened tension with Pakistan, with which India has fought three wars since the two nations gained independence from Britain in 1947. India's military has been complaining of shrinking budgets since the huge expansion of the 1980s.

Total spending will be 1.5 trillion rupees (dhs 49 billion), with a predicted shortfall of revenue of 60 billion rupees (dhs 1.9 billion), he said.

Singh proclaimed success for his measured programme of shifting India away from decades of centrally planned socialism and self reliance toward integration with the global economy.

Claiming to reap the benefits for its reforms, Singh unveiled a pro-industry budget and said it will start repaying its international loans ahead of schedule.

Manmohan Singh said the liberalisation he introduced in 1991 was taking hold, boosting exports, attracting foreign investment, and raising foreign currency reserves from just over dhs 1 billion to a comfortable dhs 13 billion.

But the deficit in last year's budget was far higher than its target, ending the year at 7.3 per cent of gross domestic product, he said.

Customs duties will be cut sharply, and tourists will pay less tax on luxury hotels and high-class restaurants. Smokers, however, will pay 12 per cent more for cigarettes, now one dollar a pack.

"The economic situation has shown substantial improvement. Progress on the external front has been dramatic", Singh said, as Parliament members thumped their desks in approval.

Opposition parties criticised the budget as a sellout to multinational corporations, and warned that small Indian companies will be forced out of business.

Singh also said interest rates will be reduced by one per cent to 14 per cent and measures will be taken to stimulate industry, where growth has been sluggish.

The booming stock market fell slightly after Singh's budget speech, but industrialists said they were pleased. "There is much to be happy about", said Tarun Das, chairman of the Confederation of Indian Industries. "The mood is positive".

India's bank balance had improved enough for it to recover the gold reserves that it had mortgaged at the height of its financial crisis in 1991.

Body of 5-yr-old exhumed for autopsy

By Staff Correspondent

Police exhumed the body of five-year-old Sujana after one month and sent it to the Forensic Department of the Dhaka Medical College for autopsy yesterday afternoon.

The body was exhumed from a graveyard at Singpara village under Srinagar thana of Munshiganj district following an order of the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate.

Sujana died on January 30 after an eye-operation for cataract under the supervision of Dr AKMA Mukhtadir.

Sujana's uncle Fazlul Haque lodged a case with the Ramna police accusing Dr Mukhtadir of negligence of duty and making him responsible for the death, said police. Later, the case was shifted to the Detective Branch of Police for investigation.

Dr Mukhtadir told The Daily Star last night that he completed the operation successfully but Sujana died after the operation due to cardiac failure

Borrowing from banks has become expensive

By Sohail Manzur

Borrowing money from the banks has now become much expensive because of the replacement of the equitable mortgage system with the newly introduced mortgage registration system.

The entrepreneurs have to pay Tk 5 lakh as fee for registration of mortgaged property worth Tk one crore, whereas the matter could have been settled with only about Tk 20,000 under the previous token mortgage or the equitable mortgage system.

According to sources, the new system has been introduced at the instance of the Law Ministry and the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

The Law Ministry had insisted on introducing the new system arguing that the token mortgage registration system was not enough to cover the risks of the banks as this would not be able to resist the sale of mortgaged property by the borrowers. The NBR on the other hand opposed the previous system saying that the government was being deprived of revenue. The new system has, however, made the borrowing more expensive for the businessmen specially the small traders.

An official of the Ministry of Finance, when contacted, said the Ministry opposed the new system considering the huge amount of money the borrowers will have to pay but it was introduced as the Law Ministry refused to allow the token mortgage registration. The government is however, planning to reduce the registration fee to lessen the burden of the businessmen, the official pointed out.

According to business circles, there are several other bottlenecks including, what they said, "underhand dealing for taking loans from the banks that have been making the loans much expensive leading to non-viability of the projects.

US naval craft arrives in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Feb 28: A maritime patrol aircraft of the US navy arrived in Chittagong today on a four-day visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

It has a complement of 21 crew members, an ISPR press release said.

During its stay in the country, the aircraft will take in a joint maritime surveillance exercise with some of the Bangladesh navy ships in the Bay of Bengal. Other programmes will include static display of the aircraft at the Chittagong Air Port to a limited number of visitors on March 2.