Maiden auction

The first auction of the recently released Bangladesh Treasury Bond was held at the central bank yesterday drawing a sale of Tk 29

A dozen of banks purchased these bonds from Bangladesh Bank having two different terms for

maturity -- one with five years and another with 10 years.

The banks bought the five-year bonds worth Tk 19 crore at an interest rate of 8.10 per cent and the 10-year bonds worth Tk 10

Bangladesh Bank sources said

there were bid offers of Tk 137 crore

for the 5-year bonds and Tk 20 crore for the 10-year bonds.

DSE amends

Articles of

Association

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) yesterday approved amendment to its Articles of Association renaming

Under the amendment, the DSE council will now be known as

board of directors' and its mem-

bers (councillors) will be called 'directors'. Besides, the DSE chief

will be called as president, instead

The approval was unanimously

The amendment will be effec-

Under the present DSE consti-

The DSE was incorporated on

its council and key positions.

of treasury

bonds held

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Tourism sees buoyancy in peak season

Tour operators hopeful of 35pc growth

M ABDUR RAHIM

As peak season sets in, tourism industry in Bangladesh is basking with huge inflow of foreign tourists coupled with growing interest from

The tour operators' well organised travel operations to the attractive places like Sundarbans, Cox's Bazar and Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) areas have resulted in the buoyancy, industry insiders said.

Private tour operators are now more organised with many of them having their own hotels, restaurants, ships and luxury buses to provide quality services to travel-

Banking on these improved infrastructures, the travel industry is expected to see around 35 per cent growth in business this year, sources in the Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh (Toab)

Both inbound and outbound tourism is growing fast in Bangladesh but adequate government support is still absent in the sector though it has been declared a thrust sector, Faridul Haque,

president of To absaid on Sunday.

According to unofficial sources some 5,000 foreign tourists come Bangladesh a year who spend ,000 each during their visit. About two lakh foreigners come to Bangladesh a year for business or other purposes

Tourists from Japan is increasing rapidly and they prefer the services offered by private operators. A visit to the Sundarbans is common for all foreign tourists since it was declared a World Heritage Site, Haque said.

However, foreign tourists are still facing absence of quality hotels. "A team of 50 Japanese cancelled their plan to visit Rangpur as there is not enough hotel accommodation there," the Toab president said.

He said the government should establish more hotels in districts having tourism potentials and hand over them to private manage-

"Though the sector has been declared a thrust sector the government is not offering any tax holiday, rebate and incentives to tour

operators who are bringing in hard foreign currency," said Faridul Haque who runs Tour Planners.

Toab has 33 active members including Guide Tours, Bengal Tours, Journey Plus, Tour Planners and Galaxy who are now handling increased number of tourists from Japan, the United Kingdom, United States and India, he said.

"This year for the first time we have received visitors from China while there are increasing number of tourists visiting the country on cricketing purposes," managing Guide Tours Hasan director of Mansur told The Daily Star.

He said the tourists are increasingly visiting the Sundarbans. Sightseeing tours to different archeological sites and river cruises have also witnessed tremendous rush.

'Sixty per cent of the total tourists visit the Sundarbans while others look for archeological sites at Paharpur, Bagerhat, Mainamoti, Mahasthanghar, Kantajee temple and a good number of them go to the world's biggest natural sea beach at Cox's Bazar and the hilly towns of Bandarban and

Rangamati.'

The Guide Tours chief further attributed the growth to the favourable tourism season in India and Nepal. The tourists after visiting Nepal and India usually make a stopover in Bangladesh as it does not add any significant cost to their

Bayezid Ashraf, in-charge (reservation) of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), said all 14 hotels of BPC are booked till January 6. "We cannot take booking of many foreign and local tourists due to shortage of rooms during the peak season

Two more BPC hotels are expected to go into operation soon in Bandarban and Khagrachhari. The management of 'Ŭpal' and Prabal' has been given to private sector and BPC is running 'Laboni' and 'Shaibal' in Cox's Bazar.

Raquibul Hasan, executive officer (Tour Operation) of BPC, said people are now more interested to go on river cruise. "We are arranging 6-7 river cruises a



Mercantile Bank, WEA sign MoU

Mercantile Bank Limited (MBL) and Women Entrepreneurs have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on implementation of the bank's women entrepreneurs' development

Rokia A Rahman, president of WEA, and M Taheruddin, manag-ing director of Mercantile Bank, signed the MoU on behalf of their organisations recently in Dhaka.

MBL and WEA agreed to collaborate the effort for providing finance to emerging women entre-preneurs under the scheme, says a

An amount of Tk five crore has also been allocated for disbursement among suitable women entrepreneurs under the scheme.

Lutfar Rahman Sarkar, chief advisor of Mercantile Bank, M Nurul Islam, deputy managing director, AKM Shahidul Haque, SEVP of the bank, and Sabrina Islam, vice-president of WEA, and other officials of both organisations were present at the signing ceremony.

ETA-InfoTech, Bank Asia officials meet BoI chairman

Krishna Janardhan, CEO of ETA-InfoTech LLC of Dubai and chairman of ERA-InfoTech, and Erfanuddin Ahmed, SEVP of Bank Asia Ltd, made a courtesy call on Mahmudur Rahman, executive chairman of the Board of Investment (BoI) in Dhaka

During the meeting they discussed the developments of joint venture IT company ERA-InfoTech, says a press release.

ERA-InfoTech Ltd is set up by ETA-InfoTech LLC of Dubai, Bank Asia and RANKS-ITT for providing banking and other software solu-

Bank Asia.

tions to the local market. During its formative stage, BoI provided all cooperation. August 2001.

ERA-InfoTech has implemented online banking software in The consortium is capable of

providing connectivity and inte-DeHaven said. grated business solutions along But in Ottawa, chief Canadian with ERP to the financial as well as veterinarian Dr Brian Evans told a other sectors from a single plat news conference: "It would be

Bangladesh can export power to Indian states

Indian minister of state for commerce says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Indian Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Satyabrata Mookherjee yesterday said Bangladesh could set up power plants in border areas to export electricity to India.

"Power can be exported to the bordering Indian states where there is great demand of it," he said speaking at a reception hosted by the Sylhet Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) in his honour at

Mookherjee said since the Bangladesh government could not yet decide to export gas, the natural resources could be utilised by setting up power plants.

He said Bangladesh and India can boost bilateral trade through agreeable and favourable fiscal measures and trade facilitating tools. "India is interested in liberal trade relations and a free trade a greement (FTA) with Bangladesh."

The Indian state minister, now visiting Bangladesh on the occasion of Saarc Trade Fair 2003, said there is ample scope of develop ment in this region.

About the huge trade imbalance between Bangladesh and India he said the trade gap could be reduced through raising the export volume.

"Bangladesh can take advantage of the resurgence in this part of Asia by improving trade and investment climate as well as strengthening its transport and communication links with the Indian states," Mookherjee said.

He said the impediments in bilateral trade could be resolved by sitting together. "Trade barriers are being removed one by one. The joint working group meeting in October last had resolved some of those problems.

The Indian minister suggested removal of all non-tariff and paratariff barriers before entering into a bilateral FTA. "We are in the pro

cess of resolving things, FTA would be the ultimate solution," he

Chaired by SCCI President M Mohiuddin Ahmed, the function was addressed, among others, by Kamaluddin Ahmed, first vice-president FBCCI, MA Razzaque Chowdhury, ex- president of SCCI Faruque Mahmud Chowdhury senior vice- president of SCCI and RR Dass, minister (E& C) of Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

RR Dass in his speech said the State Bank of India would soon open a branch in Sylhet.

Satyabrata Mookherjee, who was born in Sylhet, visited his ancestral house in the town. Now there is a school at the house Mookherjee's family migrated to India in 1947 after he completed nigh school education in Sylhet.

Mookherjee also visited MC College and some other distant relatives' houses.

Steel, re-rolling mills owners to continue strike

Bangladesh Steel Mills Owners Association (BSMOA) and Bangladesh Re-rolling Mills Association (BRMA) resolved not to resume production unless their demands regarding power and VAT were met.

"We are the worst sufferers of loadshedding and that's the main reason we, as bulk consumers, sought special electricity price, BSMOA general secretary Sheikh Masudul Alam told this news agency after a joint meeting yester-

"Just imagine how much loss we have to incur when a loadshedding happens after two and a half a hours of melting a unit that needs three hours for the melting process," he said.

He said the two associations in

the joint meeting expressed their determination not to resume operation of their mills before meeting the demand for lower electricity tariffs and other

Some 300 re-rolling and about 70 steel mills remained inoperative after the owners failed to convince the government to consider their demands, which also include lowering VAT.

Another key demand of the two associations is opening the import of ship scraps mainly used in the steel and re-rolling mills and other aw materials used in the industry.

"As importing ship scraps is allowed only for their association the people made it into a coterie for which most of the re-rolling and the steel mills are suffering," said the BSMOA general secretary.

He said the ship-scrap importers developed a few mills and they import scraps only for their industry. "For others they set high price that made our industry nonprofitable," he said

The BSMOA general secretary

nformed that they continued their

bid through meetings to convince the government to accept their demands on power, VAT and scrap The meeting was attended by the associations' leaders Abul Hossain Ratan, Abu Bakar Siddiq,

Sheikh Fazlur Rahman Bakul, Nooi Alam Babul, Mohammad Hossain Sirajul Islam and Bashirullah. They will sit for another round

of consultation today. Also the owners of the steel and re-rolling mills will meet in the port city of Chittagong on December 30



Rokia A Rahman, president of Women Entrepreneurs' Association, Bangladesh (WEA), and M Taheruddin, managing director of Mercantile Bank Limited, sign a memorandum of understanding on implementation of the bank's women entrepreneurs' development scheme recently in Dhaka. Among others, Lutfar Rahman Sarkar, chief advisor of Mercantile Bank, M Nurul Islam, deputy managing director, AKM Shahidul Haque, senior executive vice-president of the bank, and Sabrina Islam, vice-president of WEA, were present.

sion at this time ... As yet, there is no

definitive evidence that confirms

that the BSE -- infected cow originated in Canada."

In May this year, Canadian

officials reported a single case of mad cow disease in a black Angus

cow in Alberta, but the USDA said it

was too early to speculate on

whether the two cases were

This week's discovery of the first

US case of mad cow disease in a 6-

1/2 year-old Holstein dairy cow has

halted most US exports of beef,

sent food company stocks tum-

bling and shaken consumer confi-

US-Canada row over mad cow origin premature to draw such a conclu-

REUTERS, Washington

The US Agriculture Department said Saturday the Washington state dairy cow infected with mad cow disease had probably been imported from Canada but Canadian authorities called the statement premature.

Ron DeHaven, the USDA's chief veterinarian, told reporters the animal was likely imported into Idaho from Alberta, Canada, in

"The positive animal likely entered the United States as part of

a group of 74 dairy cattle that were imported through the border crossing at Eastport (in Idaho),

Some two dozen countries including Japan have banned US beef, seriously threatening the \$27 billion US cattle industry

Buyer-seller meet with Indian cos begins today STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A two-day 'Buyer-Seller Meet' begins in Dhaka today to explore new business avenues and develop partnership between Bangladeshi and Indian business communities.

Satyabrata Mookherjee, Indian minister of state for commerce and industry, will inaugurate the meet at Hotel Sarina. Federation of Indian Export Organisation (FIEO) and High Commission of India in Dhaka are jointly organising the

The meeting will highlight readymade garments, garments accessories, textile, fabrics, cotton food0-grains, food items, chemicals, engineering goods, machinery, agro-commodities and gems & jewelry sector.

Citibank to give Tk 280m loan to **United Leasing**

day. The five-day fair began on Saturday.

Citibank NA Bangladesh will give a Tk 280 million loan to the United Leasing Company Limited (ULC). An agreement to this effect was

signed between the two organisa-tions in Dhaka recently, says a Abrar A Anwar, head of Corporate Bank of Citibank NA, and MM Alam, managing director of ULC, signed the deal.

Hafeezuddin Ahmad, country manager of International Finance Corporation (IFC), Mamun Rashid, CEO and Yusuf Saeed, head of Structured Finance of Citibank NA,

among others were present. Citibank is the arranger of this financing and IFC provided credit to assist ULC to use the funding to further expand its portfolio of leases to the small & medium enterprises.

BB auction

UNB, Dhaka

The 277th auction of treasury bills was held here yesterday.

A total of Tk 232.60 crore, Tk 5 crore, Tk 10 crore, Tk 25 crore, Tk 5 crore and Tk 20.50 crore were offered respectively for the 28-day, 91-day, 182-day, 364-day, 2-year and 5-year bills

Of these, Tk 172.10 crore, Tk 5 crore, Tk 5 crore, Tk 5 crore, Tk 25 crore, Tk 5 crore and 19.10 in total of Tk 231.20 crore of 28-day, 91-day, 182-day, 364-day, 2-year and 5-year bills were accepted respectively.

Saarc trade fair pulls crowd despite rain

Visitors browse through items put on display at a stall at the fifth Saarc Trade Fair 2003 at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka yester-

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The fifth Saarc Trade Fair 2003 being held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka attracted a significant number of visitors in spite of inclement weather yesterday, the second day of the fair.

Leading companies from six South Asian nations have put a wide range of products on display at the fair, which began on Saturday.

Due to an unusual spell of light rain the turnout of visitors was very little in the morning but in the afternoon a large number of people started coming to visit the exposi-

As the stalls have been set up outside the conference centre, water-logging at the fair venue created problems for both the visitors and exhibitors. Some workers were found reassembling their stalls after the rain.

While talking to The Daily Star some visitors expressed their dissatisfaction over the situation and said such a fair should have arranged inside the conference Saarc countries are participating at

Visitors showed special interest in pashmina (fur) products brought by the Nepalese companies at the fair. The price of shawl is ranging from Tk 1,200 to Tk 3,000 while mufflers are selling at Tk 1,000 per piece.

but I think the price is too high," said Fahmida Akter, a fashion designer. While talking to The Daily Star she was savouring pickles which she brought from a Pakistani stall at the fair Nepalese handmade paper

"I came to buy a Nepalese shawl

products also attracted the visitors. he other Nepalese products on display include wooden crafts, textile items, cotton bags, handicrafts and herbal tea. Visitors also gathered at the

displaying agro-products, woodcrafts, fruits, seeds, herbal medicine and hardboards. "This is a great opportunity for the people who know very little

Bhutanese stalls, which are mainly

about Bhutanese items," said an organiser of the fair. Bangladeshi companies are

showcasing pharmaceuticals products, textile, confectionery items, cement, software products, water purifier, foods, plastic items, leather goods, cosmetics, sarees, herbal products, soft drinks, handicrafts and furniture. Indian companies came up with

engineering items, auto parts, pharmaceuticals, packaging, battery separators, iron and steel items, industrial products, stone items, woollen items, handlooms, sarees, textiles, handicrafts and food items.

Companies from Sri Lanka are

participating in the show to exhibit chemical products, agricultural items, sports goods, tires, three wheeler, herbal products, footwear, coconut oil, water pumps, chocolates and confectioneries. Pakistani enterprises are

showcasing handicrafts, furniture, textile fabrics, bed sheets, herbal products, prayer mats, spices, pickles, table and trolley sets, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, handicrafts, leather goods and sports items.

The fair will remain open to visitors from 10am to 8pm everyday till Wednesday.