

Musharraf's exit

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however smart, efficient, modern, organised and well meaning (and they sometimes are) ultimately fail, and miserably so, to live up to the expectation of the people. Sometimes, if not rarely, they begin well. But ultimately it all ends in disaster as it also happened in Musharraf's case. In addition to curtailing freedom what military dictatorships end up doing is distorting institutions -- administrative, financial and supervisory -- including their own. The most efficient of military ends up being corrupt and as such destroy themselves from within. And it all happens because they enjoy power and authority without being held accountable, which corrodes the discipline that is the lifeblood of a genuine military.

Pakistan should serve as the greatest example of how a country's stride into maturity was repeatedly thwarted by self-serving military charlatans. Each time a military dictator came, he promised to make Pakistan stronger and left it weaker and debilitated in every sense of the term. General Ayub Khan (1958-69) created the over-centralised, elitist and insensitive (of people's needs) bureaucracy that widened the rich-poor gap. Fatally it created economic disparity between the two wings of the country and laid the economic foundation of its bifurcation. Gen Yahya (1969-1971) presided over the genocide of the Bengalees and created the ground for Pakistan's immediate destruction. Gen Ziaul Huq (1977-1988) ravaged whatever was left of the original spirit of Pakistan by unleashing the obscurantist forces that might yet ring the death knell of whatever is left. Finally, Gen Musharraf destroyed Pakistan's democratic recovery by staging a coup under the most indefensible of all circumstances -- that of saving his own job. In the name of "war on terror" he made Pakistan a backyard for Taliban and safe haven for al-Qaeda. Never has Pakistan been under such dark cloud of religious extremism as it is now. His selfishness and arrogance crossed all limits when he all but destroyed Pakistan's highest judiciary just to cling to power.

If there is a single factor that can be blamed for the gradual destruction of Pakistan it is the repeated military takeover of the state power.

Pakistan's sad story began with another general, Iskandar Mirza, who, back in mid-fifties manipulated himself into the presidency, and then colluded with Gen Ayub Khan to stage the coup, simply to prevent holding of the first-ever general election in Pakistan, scheduled for February 1958. If that election was held, Pakistan's history might well have been far happier.

While the generals in Pakistan were playing havoc with the country, what were the politicians doing? That is another lesson from Musharraf's departure that we need to think of today. Who opened the door for Maj Gen Iskandar Mirza to come to power? Who prevented the adoption of a constitution in Pakistan till 1956 (Pakistan was born in 1947)? Who planned with Gen Ayub to abrogate it in 1958, lest Awami League, led by Shaheed Suhrawardy, comes to power through the ballot? It can be said that two thoughts guided the politicians of Pakistan from 1947 to Ayub's coup. One was to prevent holding of the elections as long as possible and two, to deprive leaders of the eastern wing to have any share of power. (Suhrawardy's cabinet in 1957 was a honourable exception, which was brought down within 13 months of its taking office.)

After December 1971, with the civilian rule returning, elections held, and with the lesson of Bangladesh liberation fresh in the mind, people hoped that Pakistan would embark on its journey towards democracy. But Zulfikar Ali Bhutto turned into a tyrant. Under him the opposition was so oppressed that it ultimately took to streets, making the fatal opening for the much-humiliated Gen Ziaul Huq (The supremely arrogant Bhutto used to call him "My monkey general") to stage his coup.

Both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were elected twice and twice they were forced out of power through civilian-military connivance but not without a widespread reputation of corruption. Benazir's husband, now Pakistan's kingmaker, Asif Ali Zardari, was widely known as "Mr. Ten Percent" under Benazir's premiership. It was Nawaz Sharif's father known as "Abba Ji" who ruled the roost during Nawaz's tenure, not to mention Nawaz's brother Shahbaz Sharif (Chief Minister of Punjab) and his wide network of family members and cronies who joined in the loot. It was corruption, nepotism and cronyism that defeated both the twice-elected Pakistani leaders.

While we rejoice at Pakistan's renewed opportunity to take to the

43 killed

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security forces engaged in fierce clashes with the insurgents.

One of the soldiers killed in the ambush was Lieutenant-Colonel Rahmouni Mohammed, 47, the papers said.

On Thursday, the military commander in the region, Abdelkader Yamani, was also caught up in an ambush in the same area.

The Islamist militants, chased by security forces in Kabylia, were trying to regroup in the nearby Skikda region, the newspapers said.

democratic path, the facts cannot be lost on neither the people of Pakistan nor their well-wishers in the Saarc countries that Mr. Zardari's reputation leave a lot of us nervous as to his commitment to democracy. How can we forget that the Presidency of Pakistan's most popular party, the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), was bequeathed to a minor son, as if it was personal property like a land or a house to be inherited through a will. And in line with Nawabs and Zamindars of the past, a Regent has also been willed, to look after the 'throne' till the minor son is ready to take over fully. So the father, reviled as one of the most corrupt men in the country, is to run the party till then. The leaders and the workers who worked for years risking their lives against the military rule of Musharraf had no say as to who the party's leader will be. The message is clear, lest anybody has any doubt, that Pakistan Peoples' Party is the personal property of the Bhutto family to be given away as an inheritance. Now that really sounds like the party to bring democracy to Pakistan.

If we are to blame the military dictators for the destruction of democracy in Pakistan, the politicians need to share a significant part of the blame. And here lies some crucial lessons for us in Bangladesh. If the colonels who assassinated Bangabandhu, and Gen Ziaur Rahman and Gen Ershad are guilty of bringing the military into politics in Bangladesh, our politicians are also guilty of failing to consolidate, institutionalise and deepen the roots of democracy in the country. Sheikh Mujib did not have to introduce BKSAL. Sheikh Hasina did not have to damage the economy through hartals and weaken the parliament through years of boycott. Khaleda Zia did not have to set up her son to 'inherit' the throne and the other one to gobble up business of others. She needn't have set up the most corrupt regime ever by an elected government. As the leader of two-thirds majority in the parliament she did not need the likes of Harris, Falu, Babar, and hordes of others like them. She did not have to make her sister a minister and allow her two brothers to interfere in the army and in the national airlines, the Biman.

Not withstanding many differences (our tradition of democratic movement is stronger, people are far more aware of their rights, we have better social indicators, and our military today is far different from that of Pakistan and they are far more respectful of democracy and need for elected government than Pakistan army ever was), just as Pakistan looks forward to democracy, so do we. Just as in Pakistan where the two old parties, the PPP and the Muslim League, are set to resume their roles in politics, in Bangladesh, our two major parties, the Awami League and the BNP, are set to regain their dominance in our politics following the elections later this year. The question here is, just as in Pakistan, will our politicians rise to the occasion and play their patriotic and nation-building role so that the likelihood of military dictatorship is forever banished from our realm of possibility?

Argentina

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as they work to be only the third nation since World War II -- after the United States and the Soviet Union -- to end the Olympics on top of the medal table.

Their gymnasts have been a major contributor with Zou Kai winning the men's high bar and Li Xiaopeng taking the men's parallel bars crown on Tuesday.

It gave China nine of the 14 gold on offer, the most since the Soviet Union won 10 in 1988.

Zou won his second individual gold of the Games ahead of Jonathon Horton of the United States and Fabian Hambuechen of Germany.

Li added a Beijing gold to the one he scored at the Sydney Games in 2000, beating South Korea's Yoo Won-chai and Anton Fokin of Uzbekistan to snare his fourth career Olympic title.

On top of that, Lu Chunlong won the men's trampoline competition. Off the diving boards, He Chong clinched the men's 3m springboard title, giving six out-of-six golds, equalling their best ever tally in Athens four years ago, as they aim for a clean sweep of all eight.

But it didn't all end as planned.

Guo Shuang wanted a gold in the women's cycling sprint but ended with bronze, which nevertheless was China's first ever medal in the sport.

Meanwhile, Liu Xiang made an emotional apology for pulling out of the Olympics with an "unbearable" foot injury.

Liu and the nation's dream of gold ended when he hobbled off the track on Monday with what transpired to be a long-term problem with his right foot.

"I just feel so sorry. Because there were so many people supporting me. I told myself I had to run, but I just couldn't do it," Liu said in interviews with the state-run press.

Liu's fate, which saw his coach Sun Haiping collapse in tears at a post-race press conference, dominated China's state-run media with the China Daily, among others, praising his sportsmanship in the face of defeat.

"Liu Xiang was our hero. He still is," it said.

And in a Games noted for the breakthroughs made by China, a Chinese pair made the women's beach volleyball final for the first time ever.

Wang Jie and Tian Jia will face formidable opponents in American defending champions Kerri Walsh and Misty May-Treanor.

Fake visas

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take advantage of this process and they are cheating the jobseekers by producing fake visas, said an immigration official.

Asked to comment on the matter, Didarul Haque, managing director of Heaven Overseas, that processed documents of six of the deported workers, said they only helped the workers get emigration clearance from BMET and that they were not involved in securing or buying visas for the workers.

Most other countries have websites where the authenticity of their visas can be verified, but no such facility is available for the visas issued by the UAE, he said.

The government should take up the issue immediately with the UAE authorities. Otherwise, workers will continue to suffer and the travel agents that arrange the air tickets for the workers will also be affected, since they have to pay the cost of the return ticket of the deported workers," Didarul Haque said.

Preferring anonymity, another recruiting agent said workers could also wind up being deported if the employers or their representatives in Dubai refuse to accept the workers without the "payment" for the visas, which sells for a good amount of money.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary Abdul Matin Chowdhury, however, believes that there are criminals in Bangladesh who prepare the fake visas and that they have links with the recruiting agents.

"We shall take action against the recruiting agencies that had processed the documents for the deported workers," he said.

Asked whether the government should be held responsible for not raising the issue of the photocopy visa to the UAE authorities and not establishing a system to check the authenticity of the UAE visas, the secretary said, "We've asked our mission in Dubai to discuss the issue with the authorities. They also tried, but they don't have sufficient access to the UAE authorities."

Chowdhury, however, said Bangladesh signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with UAE and a joint committee formed under the MoU will soon discuss the issue in the UAE. There are also initiatives at diplomatic levels, he added.

Asked what will happen to the deported workers, DG of BMET Abdul Malek said, "We will write to the 13 agencies involved to arrange jobs for the deported workers."

DU deans polls

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environmental sciences and engineering and technology faculties."

The Awami League-backed blue panel got the social science and fine arts faculties.

The four-hour voting began at 9:00am at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) cafeteria, with Treasurer Prof Syed Abul Kalam Azad as the election commissioner.

He said about 98 per cent teachers from nine faculties cast their votes, adding that the new deans could join their offices from tomorrow if they want so.

Earlier, Prof Borhan Uddin Khan was elected as law faculty dean uncontested.

The white panel's incumbent arts-faculty dean Prof Sadrul Amin was re-elected. He bagged 116 votes while blue panel's Prof Fakhrul Alam got 107.

Prof Tajmury SA Islam secured the science faculty. She got 67 votes while rival Prof Muhiur Rahman got 47 votes.

Prof Md Abdur Rashid won the pharmacy faculty, securing 30 votes while Prof Farida Begum scrambled six votes.

Prof Abul Bashar was elected as biology-faculty dean, getting 82 votes against his rival Prof Anwar Hossain's 61.

Prof Abbas Ali Khan got 65 votes for the business studies faculty while Prof Mizanur Rahman got 53.

Prof Shahnaz Haq Hussain got the earth and environmental sciences faculty, securing 14 votes against her white panellist rival Prof Qamrul Hasan's seven and blue panellist Prof Hossain Mansur's 12.

Prof Shahida Rafique won the engineering and technology faculty. She bagged 37 votes while rival Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik got 19.

The blue panel's Prof Harun-or-Rashid was elected as dean of the social science faculty, securing 100 votes. His rival Prof Ferdous Hossain scrambled 53 votes.

Prof Rafiqun Nabi got the newly established fine arts faculty. He got 14 votes while rival white panellist Prof Abdus Sattar and Prof Mahmudul Haq got 13 and 11 votes respectively.

Thai Airways

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International Airport at 12:10pm, an airport high official told The Daily Star.

"Emergency workers evacuated the passengers from the plane," he said, adding, "The plane left ZIA at 2:30pm after changing its burst tyre."

The same thing happened at Shah Amanat International Airport while a Biman DC10-30 was landing around 12:30pm.

"One of the tyres of the aircraft burst and three others were damaged," a Biman high official said.

The flight from Abudhabi was destined for Dhaka via Chittagong.

"All the passengers of the aircraft were evacuated safely," the official added.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday sent spare wheels and engineers to Chittagong.

On July 3, passengers and crew of another Biman DC10-30 escaped unhurt when six of its tyres exploded while landing at ZIA.

Graft trial in tangle

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have been acquitted out of 149, but all main accused have been handed down punishment.

According to the Emergency Power Rules (EPR), a higher court must adjudicate any appeal against a lower court verdict in a corruption case within 90 days of filing of the appeal.

To address the problem, the government is planning to move to the Supreme Court with a request for constituting two separate benches in the HC to deal exclusively with the appeals against the verdict in special graft cases.

Contacted by The Daily Star for confirmation of the government move, Anisul Haq, lawyer for Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), said he didn't have any specific information about it, adding "I have heard about that."

Expressing his disappointment, advocate Mosharraf Hossain Kajal, one of the prosecution lawyers in the special courts, said, "We all are proceeding with graft cases in the trial court with the spirit of quick disposal. But it appears that the same spirit is absent during dealing of the appeals."

Surprisingly, in some cases, both the prosecution and the defence do not seem to be going for quick disposal of appeals, sources involved in the appeals say.

A number of lawyers, whose clients have already been convicted on graft charges, have admitted this as a "strategy".

"I don't want to move for quick disposal of the appeals as my client thinks he won't get justice during the caretaker government rule. He wants the hearing to begin after the elections when an elected government will be in power," a defence lawyer said.

Barrister Mahbubuddin Khokan, some of whose clients have also been convicted in graft cases, said, "Some convicts may choose this strategy. But I think the appeals against graft case verdicts are not coming in the serial for hearing due to long queue and backlog of cases."

A prosecution lawyer said it is the responsibility of the defence to move to quicken the appeal proceedings if they feel the necessity.

So far, the HC has received more than a dozen appeals. Though half of the appeals were received over six months ago, hearing of any of them has yet to start.

Records say over 100 cases, including 25 which have been stayed by the HC, are now pending with the special courts. Some of the cases were returned to the Court of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge, but a few of them were transferred to different special courts again.

The objective of the anti-corruption drive has been hampered a bit due to the HC stay on many graft cases. Otherwise, the courts could have disposed many other cases by now, a prosecution lawyer observed.

While dealing with graft cases, the prosecution enjoys some procedural facilities due to the EPR. The EPR has the provision of imposing some restrictions on the convicts like barring convicts from contesting polls.

A law, to be styled as the 'emergency repeal act' or 'withdrawal of emergency act', is going to be

enacted while lifting the emergency state. This law will have some "saving clauses" to keep valid some of EPR provisions including the one barring convicts from contesting elections.

Many graft cases are now under trial with other courts across the country in parallel with the special courts.

The special courts are dealing with mostly graft cases filed by ACC and National Board of Revenue (NBR) and a few bribery cases filed by police.

A total of 168 cases filed by ACC are now pending with different courts of the country till June 15. Of them, 87 are pending in Dhaka.

Of all the graft convicts, Harris Chowdhury, political secretary of ex-premier Khaleda Zia, received highest 59 years' jail by a Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in Dhaka in a single case.

Harris, who is absconding, was also awarded three-year imprisonment in each of two separate cases, one filed for graft and another for possessing foreign currency illegally.

In the special courts, businessman Obaidul Karim was awarded highest jail term -- lifetime, meaning 30 years -- in a single graft case.

Most other convicts received 13-year imprisonment.

Of the high-profile graft-suspects, three have already been found guilty in six graft cases, so far highest in number. They are Rabeya Haider, wife of former BNP minister Shahjahan Siraj, their son Rajib Siraj and businessman Atiqullah Khan Masud who received 43, 45 and 48 years' jail respectively.

At least 76 ex-lawmakers including ex-premiers Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia have been sued on graft charges.

Of the others, 43 are from BNP, 27 from the AL, three from Jamaat-e-Islami, and one each from Islami Oikya Jote and Jatiya Party (Monju).

Sixteen former lawmakers from BNP and 11 from the AL have already been convicted. Many of the convicts and accused served as ministers in the last 15 years.

Former technocrat ministers Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir from the AL, Mir Nasir Uddin from BNP and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed from Jamaat have also been convicted.

Apart from these graft cases, police, government departments and aggrieved individuals also filed cases against at least 28 BNP and four Jamaat ex-lawmakers on different criminals charges including misappropriating relief materials, extortion, violation of EPR, illegal possession of firearms and liquor and land grabbing.

Government sources say graft cases will be filed against more former MPs, while complaints against them are now under inquiry.

After the government launched anti-corruption drive and the army-led task forces started functioning, the people, who were aggrieved, started filing cases against former ministers and lawmakers on different charges.

Although some major graft cases filed by ACC, NBR and some other government departments are now being monitored by the government, other criminal cases filed by different persons are not getting proper government attention.

Landslide zones

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already filed with Khulshi Police Station against Abdullah Hasan Piko who developed the Hossain Colony slum on risky hillside at Matijahna.

He said in order to help conduct drives against illegal development of slums in risky areas, the government would take initiatives to include related sections and clauses of the environmental act in mobile court laws.

The commerce adviser said drives to relocate people living in risky hillside and valley houses continued under the initiatives taken after the June 11, 2007 tragic landslide. But the relocated people returned to the same places indicating that the relocation was not a sustainable solution so far as economic reality was concerned, he observed.

The commerce adviser also visited the relief camp set up at Lalkhan Bazar Government Primary School and the landslide spot at Matijahna.

Sources said the Hill Management Committee was formed to introduce a set of rules for proper management of hills following the rain-induced devastating landslide and inundation that left 127 people dead in the city on June 11, 2007.

Under the vigilance of the committee, different authorities filed a total of 261 cases under the environmental act and 250 families were relocated since June 11, 2007.

Sources said the initiative to declare vulnerable areas as red zones and bringing them under afforestation was proposed by the Hill Management Committee.

"The Hill Management Committee and the Technical

OMS

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kilograms of rice a day and the OMS centres have been allocated 750-765 kilograms for each day, six days a week. There will be no OMS on Fridays.

Across the nation, there will be 7141 dealers taking part in OMS programme, with dealers in the six city corporations, Narayanganj, Narsingdi and Gazipur being allocated 765 kilograms, while dealers in other areas have been allocated 510 kilograms for the daily sales.

The Food Directorate in a press release said any complaints regarding OMS should be made to the office of the Head Controller of Dhaka Rationing or on tel no 9333938.

According to Trading Corporation Bangladesh figures, rice prices have fallen by 4.35 per cent over the past month.

Harris, family

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warrants against Harris and ten others and also the order to attach their properties, as they have been absconding since the filing of the case.

ACC Deputy Director Jibon Krishna Roy filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on October 7 last year.

Earlier, an anti-graft tribunal on May 21 last year sentenced Harris to three years' imprisonment for not submitting wealth statement to the commission. He was also awarded 59 years' rigorous imprisonment in another graft case.

Harris, also joint secretary general of BNP, has been on the run since the present caretaker government took over last year.

RU students

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Vehicular movement on Dhaka-Rajshahi highway was suspended till filing of the report at 12:10am due to barricades put up by the students.

The clashes started at around 8:30pm when a group of students attacked a ticket counter of Rajshahi-Dhaka bus service for 'cheating' a fellow student. They set fire to the counter and two shops at Binodhpur Bazar.

Humayun Kabir, the student, said he had taken a Dhaka-bound bus with a ticket for Tk 250. But at Natore, he was forced to get off as the bus staff gave his seat to another person.

Chase and counter-chase continued for hours as the police and RU authorities remained onlookers. Several students and locals were injured in stone-throwing between the two sides.

The traders manhandled the RU proctor when he went to the scene at around 10:00pm.

The injured students include Sagar, Alif, Sayed, Jasim, Sazzad, Monowar, Prottoy Kumar, Aminul Islam, Sabuj and Liton.

Riot police and Rapid Action Battalion were keeping the area cordoned off as tension was running high.

Ex- BNP MP Anne

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Moving the bail petition, defence lawyers told the court that their client had surrendered before the HC seeking anticipatory bail on August 14. The HC did not grant him bail but asked him to surrender before the Sessions Judge's Court within two weeks.

The HC also asked the law enforcing agencies not to arrest or harass the petitioner within this period as the Sessions Court might consider the bail petition.

Opposing the bail petition, Additional Public Prosecutor Kabir Hussain told the court that the case was earlier brought under the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) and the trial court had no jurisdiction to entertain a petition for bail.

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court rejected the bail petition saying that he had no jurisdiction to entertain the bail petition.

Shamsul Haque, senior manager of M/S Abdul Monem Ltd, filed the case against the former BNP lawmaker with Shahbagh Police Station on September 10 last year accusing him of extorting Tk 25 lakh from the company on May 7, 2005.

In the case statement, the complainant said the accused extorted the money from the company upon securing a work order for dredging for the company. Anne initially asked the company for Tk 50 lakh but later accepted Tk 25 lakh from the complainant on May 7, 2005.

The investigation officer pressed charges against the accused on February 29 and the court framed charges against Anne on August 4.

BDR-BSF talks

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Bangladeshi criminals hiding in India.

In the previous conference held in New Delhi in April this year, BDR provided its counterpart with a list of Bangladeshi criminals, who have taken shelter in India.

BDR Director General Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed will lead the 22-member Bangladesh side while his counterpart AK Mitra will lead the Indian side at the conference.

Officials of the home and land ministries and the Bangladesh-India Joint River Commission will also attend the conference.

412 juvenile

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more serious criminal activities.

This concern was expressed yesterday at a meeting organised by the social welfare directorate on 'Transferring Detained Children from Prisons to Facilities under the Directorate of the Social Welfare'. The meeting was held at Divisional Commissioner's conference room.

The meeting was told that 67 of the detained juveniles had been transferred to the juvenile correctional facilities from various prisons over the past month.

Brig Gen (ret'd) MA Kamal, the chief adviser's special assistant for social welfare ministry, attended the meeting as the chief guest while Dewan Zakir Hossain, the social welfare secretary, was the special guest.

Among others, Dr Col Mohammad Asraful Islam Khan, additional inspector general of prisons (AIG-Prisons), high officials of social welfare ministry and departments concerned from districts in Dhaka Division were present at the meeting.

Apart from failure to implement and update existing laws, lack of awareness and disregard for the rights of the juveniles have mainly contributed to the situation, the speakers pointed out.

Chief guest MA Kamal said, "The existing child laws are very old, but these are not even being implemented properly."

"The children are most likely to enter the crime world if they are made to stay inside the jails," whereas, "If they are transferred to juvenile development centres, they will have the opportunity for correction, motivation, skills training and healthcare," he added.

Secretary Dewan Zakir Hossain said the juveniles cannot be kept in jails as per the child laws.

Ignorant and negligent law enforcers are producing these delinquent children before the court and the court is usually sending them to jail custody.

"The law enforcers, being well aware of the child rights laws, should

Rab rescues 25 people from traffickers

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rescued 25 people including five women and 14 children from a hotel in Rajshahi city as they were being trafficked to India yesterday.

Two persons -- Abdus Sattar and Robul Islam from Kalia in Narail -- were arrested from the hotel for the trafficking bid.

Sattar brought them to Rajshahi promising jobs in India. Rab officials said quoting some victims.

Acting on a tip-off, a Rab team raided Elegance residential hotel at Gonokpara and rescued them.