

CAMEL JOCKEYS: ANOTHER TRAFFICKING EVIL



"The five-year old boy screams loudly at the starting line -- shrieks of pure terror. This is part of the plan. Their cries excite the camels, pushing them to top speeds. The races that the child camel jockeys run are dangerous brushes with death. No riches await young riders, who are stolen or bought from parents in the slave markets of India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. And fame is a foolish notion. Fans will never see the camel jockey's name in magazines, not even if he is trampled to death during a race or murdered afterwards by jealous child jockeys."

- Bangladeshi children thought to be as young as two years old are being kidnapped or sold by their parents to be trained as camel jockeys in the Gulf states, where they face a life of danger, misery and loneliness.
- Dozens of boys are killed or seriously injured every year racing camels, on which huge sums are gambled illegally. The children are smuggled out of Bangladesh as soon as they are old enough to walk and taken to live in harsh conditions in the United Arab Emirates, one of the world's richest countries. They are routinely underfed and, in some cases, starved before a big race so they weigh as little as possible.
- According to a trainer interviewed, children have been known to arrive from Bangladesh with a dummy (pacifier) still in their mouth. "They sometimes still have a milk bottle in their hand when they're carried off," he said. "In the past 10 years, seven or eight children have died on this racetrack alone. Some are killed in falls, others are trampled to death. If a child weighs less than four kilos that's great. In some stables in the days before a race, they reduce the food or even starve the children."
- The children sleep five to a room on the floor of corrugated iron huts, where temperatures fluctuate between boiling in the day and freezing at night. When they are too old to ride, their visas are taken away. They must then either merge into the UAE's illegal immigrant population, or return to Bangladesh where they have only dim memories of their families and have forgotten the language.
- According to UAE officials, using children jockeys has been officially banned since 1993. However much of the racing is conducted at private desert venues by gamblers and is beyond official control.

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