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Make corporal punishment socially unacceptable

Respect the dignity of all children

A roundtable on Corporal Punishment at The Daily Star Center yesterday has brought to light the need for all members of society to work together to put an end to this terrible practice that debilitates the intellectual, physical and psychological wellbeing of children. Despite the directive from the Ministry of Education prohibiting corporal punishment in all educational institutions, including madrassas, the practice of beating up students continues. This is because corporal punishment is an acceptable form of discipline in our culture with both parents and teachers considering it to be 'normal'. Even in households, it is quite common for parents to beat their children for disobedience.

These primitive, barbaric notions have to be changed. The participants of the discussion, jointly held by BLAST, CAMPE and Save the Children, Bangladesh, that included the Minister of Primary and Mass Education, eminent education activists, human rights lawyers and representatives of child rights organisations, agreed that it was crucial to make corporal punishment socially unacceptable. This seems to be the most important lesson to be internalised by the adults of our society.

It is therefore necessary to spread the message that corporal punishment is a shameful, harmful practice that must be shunned. The government, with the help of the media, especially the electronic media, can initiate awareness campaigns targeting teachers, principals and parents. As a country that is signatory to UN conventions that guarantee and protect the rights of the child, we are morally obligated to put an end to a practice that can scar a child for life. We must always remind ourselves that it is our duty to uphold a child's dignity and physical and mental wellbeing.