

Half of primary students still face corporal punishment

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AROUND 53 per cent of primary students are still subjected to corporal punishment at schools, as shown by a recent study, despite a government ban on such punishment.

Some teachers continue to mete out physical punishment to the pupils for breaching institutional discipline, being inattentive to studies or for other reasons, although the High Court in January 2011 observed that corporal punishment of primary, secondary level students was a criminal offence.

Punishments such as caning, beating, chaining, forced haircut and confinement are a clear violation of children's fundamental rights to life and liberty, said the court ruling.

Directorate of Primary Education director general Md Alamgir said corporal punishment at schools in

the country had reduced significantly. 'Some of the teachers may still tend to discipline the students in the way. We usually take actions against such teachers,' he added.

'Corporal punishment hinders students' development. As a result, the desired educational outcome cannot be achieved. So, imposition of corporal punishment is totally undesirable,' said the government order that banned corporal punishment in August 2010.

Campaign for Popular Education executive director Rasheda K Choudhury and Ain O Salish Kendra child rights unit deputy director Moqsud Malaque blamed lack of proper monitoring by the supervising authorities for the existence of corporal punishment at schools.

'Many teachers beat and mentally torture students when the students do not take private coaching or

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Half of primary students

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tuition from the teacher,' said Moqsud Malaque.

'Corporal punishment is prohibited at schools, but the real scenario is different. An average of 52.7 per cent students face corporal punishment at schools,' said the Report Card Survey 2015 of the Campaign for Popular Education.

The survey, done on 1,675 students of 24 government primary schools of eight districts, came out in January this year.

Rasheda K Choudhury said that age-old mentality of teachers and guardians that punishment makes students more disciplined at class was one of the main reasons for the existing corporal punishment. She said that 95 per cent guardian still accept corporal punishment at schools.

Human rights organisation Ain O Salish Kendra said that at least 2,312 students faced corporal pun-

ishment between 2011 to July this year — another ominous pointer of corporal punishment persisting at schools.

Human rights defenders have said that almost all cases of corporal punishment remain unreported as acceptability of such punishment among guardians is high and only severe cases come to surface.

Guardians have said they hardly come forward to lodge complaints fearing that the teachers may take revenge by giving poor marks to their children.

Ain O Salish Kendra said that at least 516 students faced corporal punishment at schools in 2011, 445 in 2012, 333 students in 2013, 452 students in 2014, 295 students in 2015 and 271 students till July this year.

It also said that at least 19 students died or committed suicide after being subjected to inhuman pun-

ishments. ASK gathers information by scanning 13 national newspapers.

ASK and CAMPE officials have said that many teachers still carry cane in classroom to scare students and if a student fails to answer the question or complete his or her homework, the teacher on many occasions hit them with cane, sometime pull their ears, or hair, or make them put their head under the table.

Sometimes teachers put a pen or pencil between student's fingers and squeeze them.

Bangladesh Government Primary School Teachers Association president Awal Talukder said that teachers were well informed about the ban on corporal punishment. 'But some teachers use corporal punishment in classes to quell the mischievous children, due mainly to their old-age mentality,' he added.

'The field level authori-

ties end their task of monitoring by only forwarding order of banning corporal punishment,' he observed.

The DPE director general said they were monitoring the corporal punishment situation and added that the government had recently sent letters to all primary schools again asking teachers not to give corporal punishment to the pupils.

Primary and mass education ministry in an order on May 12 said that there was no scope of meting out physical and mental punishment to the students of primary schools. 'Any kind of physical and mental punishments will be regarded as misconduct and action will be taken against such teachers,' the order read.

The DPE on Tuesday had asked all primary school authorities to display slogans against corporal punishment at a visible place of the schools.