Hasina to be smacking her ministers on a regular basis or Opposition Leaders Khaleda Zia and former president Ershad to be applying a stick across the backs of those who do not meet the standards they demand, for the benefit of the nation.

But it's obvious that corporal punishment would only yield a mammoth and monstrous negative effect on adults who would cloak their feelings and eventually retaliate. So why would anyone in their right mind think children are different, that corporal punishment would be beneficial to them and in turn benefit society? Get real! The moment you hit a child, you trigger a time-bomb that's likely to explode when least expected and it ought to be remembered that time is on their side, not ours.

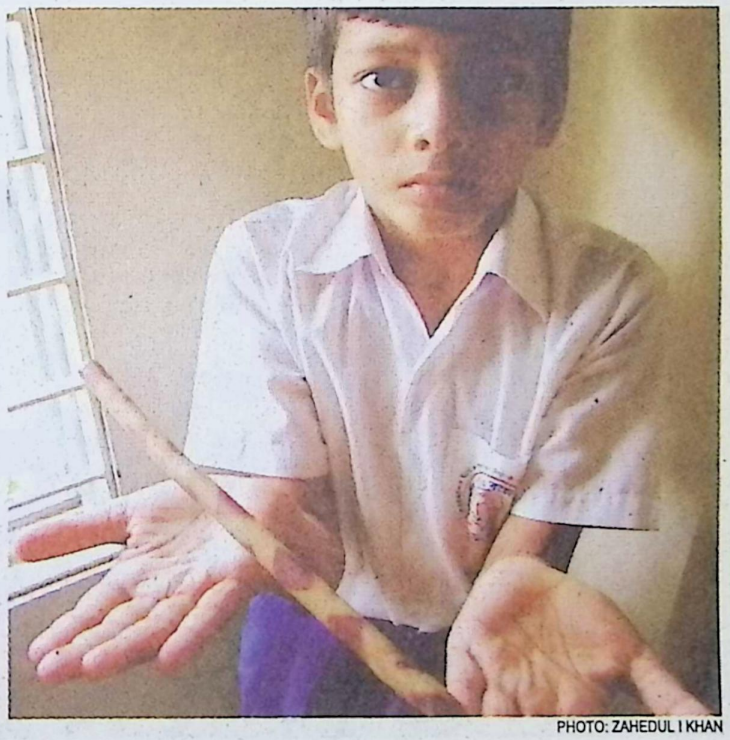


PHOTO: ZAHEDUL I KHAN

In the latest report condemning corporal punishment, Prof. Tracie Afifi of the University of Manitoba (Canada) uncovered a link between hitting children and the increased potential for serious health problems in the coming years. She said harsh physical punishment administered to kids – acts of pushing, grabbing, slapping and hitting – can lead to a higher risk of cardio-vascular disease, arthritis and obesity.

The Canadian Medical Association Journal has also published a scathing editorial on the shortsightedness of corporal punishment for children and the need for parents and teachers to explore other, more positive methods to discipline their children.

It said: "Children who are given corporal punishment in school or in the home, spanked, slapped, grabbed and pushed, shoved, kicked, beaten with a cane or any other means of physical punishment, may be at an increased risk for developing mental problems later in life and it may cause mood and anxiety disorders or lead to alcohol and drug abuse."

In July 2012, the same university sent an earth-shattering shockwave throughout the world pleading – for the sake of the children and society on the whole – to abolish corporal punishment completely and immediately.

British psychologists at Plymouth University informed us that punishment in childhood makes kids more prone to serious illness and that smacking or even shouting at children boosts their risk of developing cancer, heart disease and asthma.

Thanks to modern superheroes Justice Md. Imman Ali and Justice Md Sheikh Hasan Arif corporal punishment was outlawed in Bangladesh schools and madrassas on January 13, 2011. They in their vast wisdom defined the act as *'cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and a clear violation of a child's fundamental right to life, liberty and freedom'*.

Although it's no longer lawful or acceptable for a 'teacher' to strike, verbally abuse, discriminate against or threatens any child, there are still many ignorant teachers and headmasters in Bangladesh who disagree, flaunt the law, and whose actions cry out for exemplary punishment.

Just as we must always remember and honour the heroes who fought and won independence for Bangladesh, we must never forget the cruelty and inhuman treatment of the 14 girl students of Talimul Quran Mahila Madrasah in Kadamtali who in May 2012, were literally branded for life with a red-hot cooking spatula by their 'teacher' to give them the experience of hell.

If that wasn't the biggest wake-up call to the evils of corporal punishment, there is little hope of Bangladesh ever becoming civilised.

The seeds sown today bear the fruits of tomorrow and if the youth of today are to be the upright law-abiding citizens we hope for tomorrow, we ought to respect them more and remove the weeds from the education system that choke their development.

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