The Daily Star
FOUNDER EDITOR: **LATE S. M. ALI**

End the criminality within crime fighters

Revelation that Pranto was a victim of dirty policing calls for stern action

It comes as little surprise that a police investigation has confirmed what the family of Mirza Ishtiaq Ahmed Pranto, a law student who died in June while in custody of the Detective Branch (DB) of police in Faridpur, had been desperately trying to establish: that the narcotics charges brought against him were fabricated. The inquiry has found that there was no evidence that Pranto had drugs in his possession when arrested, and that "financial negotiations with Pranto's family" had taken place while he was in custody. All these factors, the report concluded, could have caused mental stress that may have contributed to his death.

It is encouraging that the investigating team has established the truth of Pranto's innocence. But it does not change the fact that a young man is dead after being framed by corrupt law enforcers. The allegations of torture made by his family now seem more plausible. This is a pattern that we have seen repeatedly in the past—law enforcers arrest an individual, bring made-up charges against them, take them into custody, and soon after, declare them dead with no credible explanation. Pranto's case could have ended the same way if it had not received such public attention. A *The Daily Star investigation* last month also revealed several contradictions in the police version of events. All this may have played a role in bringing the truth to light.

But what happens when there is no public pressure or media attention? When deals are made quietly and victims are released if they are fortunate, and dead if they are not? According to the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), at least 39 inmates died in prisons in the first three months of the year alone. Among them, 16 were convicts and 23 were awaiting trial. Twelve were leaders and activists of Awami League (Pranto was reportedly a Chhatra League activist). Evidently, despite the ouster of a regime that wielded power through torture, abduction, and killings, these practices have not been eliminated from the system. This is especially unacceptable for a government formed in the spirit of the uprising, which gave people hope that the days of arbitrary arrests, fabricated cases, custodial torture, and deaths in custody were over.

In the Faridpur case, the inquiry committee has recommended departmental action against 11 DB members over their conduct in the incident. This cannot be an end in itself. The government must acknowledge the gravity of the alleged crimes of filing a false case, torture, extortion, and causing the death of a detainee, and take necessary punitive and preventive measures. The amended Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013 must be enforced rigorously and uniformly across the country. The government must ensure impartial investigations into every custodial death case reported, including alleged suicides of inmates, and punish those responsible. It must demonstrate that it will not tolerate corruption and criminality within the law enforcement and security agencies.

Bring the stranded Bangladeshis home

Govt must dismantle networks luring young men to Russia-Ukraine war

We are alarmed by a recent report that highlighted the horrors faced by Bangladeshi migrant workers who were lured to Russia with promises of a better future but later had little choice but to fight in the Ukraine war. Many of them also ended up in Ukrainian jails as prisoners of war (POWs). The stories of these men go beyond isolated incidents, pointing to exploitation by domestic actors and their transnational network, the crippling desperation and helplessness plaguing the country's youth, and the government's apathy and unpreparedness. This is especially alarming given that at least 104 Bangladeshis had been reportedly recruited into the Russian military as of February 2026, while at least 34 of them had been reportedly killed.

The experiences of three POWs in Ukraine—Rimel from Gaibandha, Sarwar from Mymensingh, and Kamrul from Brahmanbaria—suggest that trafficking networks are not confined to any isolated region, nor does their recruitment strategy easily raise doubts in the minds of potential migrants. For instance, Rimel was offered a scaffolding job in Russia for which he spent Tk 6 lakh; but once he lost this stable work, he had to join the Russian military. Like him, Sarwar paid an exorbitant amount to an agency and travelled to Russia to work on a gas project, but when the project expired, he signed contracts written in Russian and joined the military. Kamrul, meanwhile, alleged that he was deceived by an Uzbek broker who offered to take him to Italy, but after he gave them several lakhs of taka in advance, he too ended up in Russia. All three men mentioned in our report were desperate to recover the money they had spent on a journey built on deception, which pushed them towards increasingly dangerous choices.

What is puzzling is that none of the POWs were contacted by the Bangladeshi authorities. Why is the government showing such apathy in repatriating these men who only hope to return home as soon as possible? The indifference on the government's part, compounded by the lack of initiatives to dismantle the trafficking networks preying on young desperate men, deeply disappoints us. We strongly urge the government to begin the repatriation process of the stranded Bangladeshis in war zones. Also, investigations against the local recruiting agents and their related offices involved in such fraudulent activities must be strengthened, along with initiating widespread awareness programmes. Above all, the root of the problem that leads a section of our youth to consider sailing for the dangerous unknown must be addressed. Young people should be able to see at least a safe future in their own homeland.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Iraq invades Kuwait

On this day in 1990, Iraqi forces invaded their tiny, oil-rich neighbour Kuwait, overwhelming their defence forces.

PROPERTY REFORM FOR PARENTS

A step in the right direction, but mind the gaps



MIND THE GAP

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NOSHIN NAWAL

On July 30, 2026, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman stated that the government is considering amending the Transfer of Property Act, 1882 to allow parents to retain the right to possess and enjoy property during their lifetime even after transferring ownership to their children. Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat, he said the proposed reform aims to protect parents from becoming dependent on their children after gifting or transferring property, and to reduce family disputes and property-related civil litigation. Its stated objective is straightforward. Parents who transfer property during their lifetimes should not have to fear losing the security of their home or becoming dependent on the goodwill of the very children who receive it.

Viewed through the narrow lens of elder protection, the law minister's proposal is both practical and overdue. It addresses a genuine concern that has long discouraged many parents from making lifetime gifts, which, in legal terms, mean a transfer of ownership of property between living persons without any price attached. Yet its implications extend far beyond protecting elderly parents. It raises important questions about Muslim personal law, succession, women's property rights, and the future of property transactions in Bangladesh. The first question is whether the proposal conflicts with Islamic inheritance law. At first glance, some may assume that it does. After all, Islamic law prescribes fixed inheritance shares for heirs, including daughters, and those rules are regarded by many as both legally and religiously significant. Legally, however, the position is more nuanced.

Inheritance law applies only upon death and governs the estate, i.e. everything a person owns at the time of his/her death. A hiba, by contrast, is an *inter vivos* transfer, a gift made during the donor's lifetime. Once a valid hiba is completed under the applicable principles of Muslim personal law, the property generally ceases to form part of the donor's estate. The proposed reform does not appear to alter that fundamental principle. Rather, it modifies the legal consequences of the gift by allowing the donor to retain possession and beneficial use during their lifetime. In other words, the proposal does not rewrite Islamic inheritance law. It changes when inheritance law comes into force. That distinction is subtle, but significant.



VISUAL: **ANWAR SOHEL**

If more property is transferred during a person's lifetime, less property may ultimately remain within the estate to be distributed under the ordinary rules of succession. The proposed amendment, therefore, shifts the practical importance of inheritance law without necessarily changing its legal content. That shift has important implications for women. Some social media commentators have suggested that the minister's proposal could strengthen women's property rights, and there is a credible argument supporting that view. Many parents hesitate to transfer property during their lifetime because doing so has traditionally meant surrendering ownership, control and, in many cases, their own sense of security. Allowing parents to retain lifetime possession may remove that psychological and practical barrier. A parent who has long intended to transfer property to a daughter may now feel sufficiently protected to formalise that intention without fearing displacement. Yet the opposite outcome is equally conceivable.

Because lifetime gifts generally fall outside the estate later governed by inheritance law, a parent, feeling secured by the proposed change, may also choose to transfer substantial assets exclusively to their son before succession rules ever become operative. In such circumstances, daughters would inherit only from the assets remaining in the estate at death. If little remains, the practical value of their inheritance rights may be significantly reduced, even though the law governing inheritance itself remains unchanged. This is not a contradiction. It is the inevitable consequence of shifting wealth distribution from succession to lifetime transfers. Whether that development ultimately advances or weakens women's economic security cannot be answered by examining the statute alone. The proposal is legally neutral. Its social consequences will depend upon how families choose to use it. That is precisely why the debate should not be reduced to slogans about protecting parents or empowering daughters. It concerns both, but it is ultimately about something larger: how legal rules interact with social realities.

The proposal also raises practical questions that will require careful legislative drafting. What precisely does "lifetime possession" entail? Does it include the right to lease the property and receive rental income? Who bears responsibility for maintenance, taxation, and insurance? How will retained possessory rights be reflected in the land registration system? Can a child mortgage property that remains subject to a parent's lifetime right of occupation? What protection will exist for third-party purchasers or creditors acting in good faith? Without clear answers, the proposal risks replacing one category of litigation with another.

This should not be read as an argument against reform. On the contrary, the proposal demonstrates a welcome recognition that good private law seeks to prevent disputes rather than merely resolve them after relationships have broken down. But good legislation should also be judged by the legal relationships it reshapes along the way. The proposed amendment does more than protect elderly parents. It recalibrates the relationship between lifetime gifts, inheritance, and property ownership. Whether that recalibration ultimately promotes fairness, strengthens family autonomy, or produces unintended inequalities will depend not only on the wording of the final legislation, but also on the choices families make once the law places a new legal tool in their hands.

Blaming the youth is easy. We must rethink how we support parents



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SINA AKAND

Over the last two years, there have been many reports of young people attacking someone or engaging in violent acts in public places, educational institutions, or even at government offices. Many parents also say that their children have become increasingly disrespectful at home and that managing their behaviour has become more challenging. While we cannot see what happens behind closed doors, the increasing aggression, violence, and mob behaviour seen in our communities suggest that something is going wrong long before these young people enter public life.

Social media is full of debates about the decline of moral education, or *noitik shikkha*. Many argue that today's young people lack respect, empathy, and a sense of responsibility. Others look back 20 or 30 years and wonder why behaviour that was once considered unacceptable has become increasingly common. Some blame declining family values, while others point to schools, weakening social cohesion, social media, political culture or shortcomings in the justice system. Some incidents appear to be politically motivated, while others are simply acts of indiscriminate violence with little regard for the consequences. While each of these factors may play a role, one reality is difficult to ignore: the foundations of moral education are laid long before children encounter schools, social media or the wider world. It begins at home.

Children's behaviour is shaped by a complex interaction of family, education, community, peer influence, technology, and wider social conditions. Their earliest lessons about respect, empathy, self-control, and responsibility, however, are learned within the family. They learn how adults treat one another, manage emotions, respond to conflict, and resolve disagreements. Many of us learned social behaviours by watching our parents and grandparents and seeing how they treated one another, neighbours, and even strangers, regardless of their religion, social class or gender. This is why parents, together with the extended family, are a child's first and most influential teachers.

Research consistently demonstrates that early childhood experiences have lifelong consequences. Children who grow up in homes where harsh or violent discipline is common, or who witness violence such as intimate partner violence (IPV) and frequent family conflict, are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural difficulties later in life. When violence, aggression, and intimidation become normal within the home, children may carry these behaviours into school, friendships, and eventually the wider society. Their early experiences shape how they treat others, understand respect, empathy, and fairness, communicate, and judge what is acceptable behaviour. In many cases, they repeat these behaviours because they have come to see them as normal. This does not mean that every child exposed to adversity will become violent. Many children demonstrate remarkable resilience and go on to lead healthy and productive lives despite difficult circumstances. However, supportive parenting, positive role models, and safe, nurturing home environments remain among the strongest protective factors against future violence and disrespectful behaviour.

Evidence from Unicef and the WHO shows that strengthening parenting interventions can play a significant role in preventing violence against children and intimate partner violence. By promoting positive parenting, reducing harsh or violent discipline, and strengthening caring family relationships, these interventions create safe and supportive environments in which children learn positive values and behaviours. Preventing violence in the home is therefore not only about protecting children today; it is also about shaping the values, attitudes, and behaviours they will carry into adulthood.

In the UK and many other high-income countries, parenting is recognised as a skill that can be strengthened through education and support. In Bangladesh, however, parenting is often viewed through the lens of physical health: ensuring children receive vaccinations, nutritious food, and access to healthcare. While these are essential, parenting is about much more than meeting a child's physical needs; it is about supporting a child's overall wellbeing. This includes nurturing emotional wellbeing, modelling respectful behaviour, and helping children develop the values, empathy, and self-control that guide their behaviour. Parenting today is far more challenging than it was for previous generations. Families face increasing economic pressures, the constant influence of digital technology, and the daily challenge of managing children's screen time and online exposure. Yet, many parents remain reluctant to seek or accept parenting support. If we want to raise a responsible generation that respects the dignity of others, shows empathy, and rejects violence, supporting parents must become a national priority.

Unfortunately, parenting education is yet to be integrated into Bangladesh's education or public health systems. As Bangladesh has allocated a record education budget this year, this presents a timely opportunity to invest not only in schools but also in parents. Dedicated funding should be allocated to develop comprehensive parenting programmes, beginning during pregnancy and continuing throughout early childhood and adolescence as part of a national early intervention strategy. Supporting parents should not be viewed as a social welfare expense but as an investment in national development. Equipping parents with the knowledge and skills to raise confident, respectful, and resilient children is one of the most effective ways to prevent violence, strengthen communities, and build a healthier society. Parents matter. Empowering them may be one of the most important investments we can make not only for our children, but for the future of our society.

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