

# Bullying at schools should stop

*Create safe school environment for children*



Bullying at schools, which often leaves negative impact on children's mental development, is largely going unreported and thus unaddressed according to a report in this newspaper yesterday. And the problem has become prevalent according to Unesco, which estimates that 23 percent of school students in Bangladesh are becoming victims of bullying.

According to a Unesco report, victims of bullying are nearly twice as likely to feel isolated, be unable to sleep at night, and contemplate suicide. It can also affect how well a child is able to concentrate on

their studies, cause increased absenteeism or even lead to them dropping out of school. As a result, it is crucial for school authorities to ensure that children are able to attend and enjoy school, without the threat of harassment.

Unfortunately, our schools are not doing enough to ensure a secure environment for their students, as evident from the large percentage of students that are reportedly being bullied. And in some cases, teachers and school staff themselves have been guilty of mistreating students. When the adults fail to realise what kind of impact this may have on young impressionable minds, then we have a serious problem on our hands.

Following the suicide of a school student after one of her teachers humiliated her parents in front of her, the government decided to prepare an anti-bullying policy, keeping provisions of punishment for offenders. This is indeed a good initiative. However, what is also necessary is awareness among school authorities and staffers in particular, about the problems of bullying and how to properly deal with students—whether they be victims of bullying or the perpetrators. What is also essential is for schools to have qualified counsellors that can help students navigate through different challenges, including that of bullying.