

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Make this Deepavali safe for your children

Every year, hospitals get several cases of injuries for want of care while bursting crackers

Sahana Charan

BANGALORE: For six-year-old Gajendra, the festival of lights turned into one of darkness last Deepavali. He was just watching his friend light crackers when one of them burst in front of his eyes causing a serious injury, which later developed into cataract.

Every year, hospitals get several cases of crackers-related injuries for want of care while bursting crackers. For many, the festival of lights turns into a nightmare.

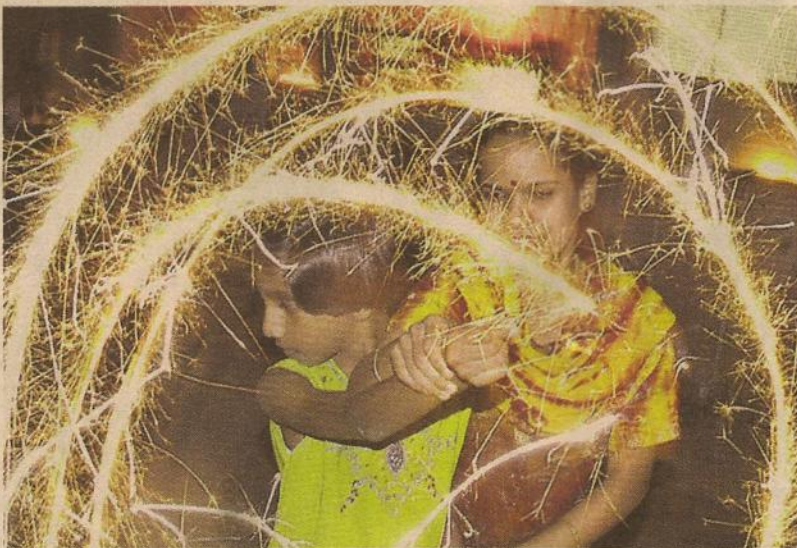
According to doctors, 40 per cent of those who suffered such injuries are children below the age of 14, and it is mostly boys in the age group of 10 to 14.

"According to statistics, 38 per cent of injuries involve hands and fingers, while 19 per cent are caused to the eyes. About half of the injuries are burns, especially in the face, hand, wrist or arm. Contusions and lacerations are the next most common kind of injuries," Arun Samprathi, consultant paediatric ophthalmologist, Narayana Nethralaya, said.

Dr. Samprathi said most of the severe injuries were caused by crackers such as "rockets", "bombs" and "flowerpots".

Injuries caused by "rockets" to the eyes might result in blindness. Retinal injury could lead to an immediate loss of vision as well as bleeding inside the eyes. Cataract and glaucoma could be long-term problems. Crackers-related injuries were most commonly associated with "bombs" (51 per cent), "bottle rockets" (12 per cent) and sparklers (7 per cent).

Last year, Narayana Nethralaya received 40 eye injury cases of which



PLAY SAFE: Sparklers not only bring joy but also sadness if care is not taken while lighting them. — PHOTO: K. GOPINATHAN

Precautions

- Do not allow children to play with crackers without supervision
- Burst crackers away from houses and inflammable material
- Keep water nearby for emergencies

five were serious. Minto Ophthalmic Hospital and Research Institute received three cases with serious injuries, while two were attended to at Victoria Hospital.

According to K.R. Ravindra of the Department of Medicine at Victoria Hospital, injuries to eyes and ears during Deepavali were most common.

"Eye injuries are usually the most serious followed by injury to the ear,

wherein there may be rupture of the eardrum and subsequent loss of hearing. Burns in the hands, face and feet may lead to infection or a permanent scar," Dr. Ravindra said.

In 1979, a major fire broke out in the City Market area where crackers were being sold. Seventeen persons died in the incident. Subsequently, the Government made it mandatory that crackers be sold in open grounds.

Minister for Health and Family Welfare R. Ashok said parents should take precautions so that children would not get injured while bursting crackers. "I appeal to the public not to burst 'atom bombs' and 'rockets' that may cause grievous injuries," he added.

Emergency care

Padmabhushan Dr. M.C. Modi Charitable Eye Hospital will be open on all the three days of Deepavali festival to attend to eye injuries caused by firecrackers. For details, call 23492233, 41287198 or 41287859.