

By Kumar Vikram
in Palwal (Haryana)

SEVENTY people, mostly students, have fully or partially lost their eyesight after playing Holi with harmful colours in Sindh village in Haryana's Palwal, 85 km from the Capital.

Four villagers have lost their eyesight fully and doctors are not sure if they will regain it. The rest have lost it partially. Doctors warned they might lose it completely unless treated immediately.

The victims are in their early 20s, mostly students studying in local colleges.

The sight looked surreal when this reporter visited the village on Saturday: scores of young men wearing dark glasses or with their eyes bandaged, ready to board vehicles that would take them to better-equipped hospitals.

It seemed the entire village had gone blind overnight.

The boys were on Saturday shifted to hospitals in Faridabad and neighbouring towns as the village lacks medical facility to treat the patients.

Till Saturday morning, most had not received adequate medical attention, administered only eye drops. One of the victims, Naresh Kumar, was using an eye drop past its expiry date.

VED PRAKASH

"Why are we still so underdeveloped. There is hardly any medical facility in the village and we have to travel 5 km for basic needs. There is no doctor or even a good medicine shop in the village. I don't know if my vision will ever be restored. My career is finished," he said, wearing dark glasses.



MUKESH & SONU

The two are among four boys who have lost their vision fully. Doctors are not sure if they will regain it. At a makeshift camp, doctors examined them on Thursday. Aditya Chaudhary, the chief medical officer of Palwal Hospital, said: "Their eyes have been damaged seriously and nothing can be said at this stage."



NARESH KUMAR

He was using an eye drop past its expiry date. Kumar, who has partially lost his vision, said he bought it from a chemist shop at a private hospital, but did not know that it had expired. He stopped using it on Saturday when it was pointed out by our photographer.



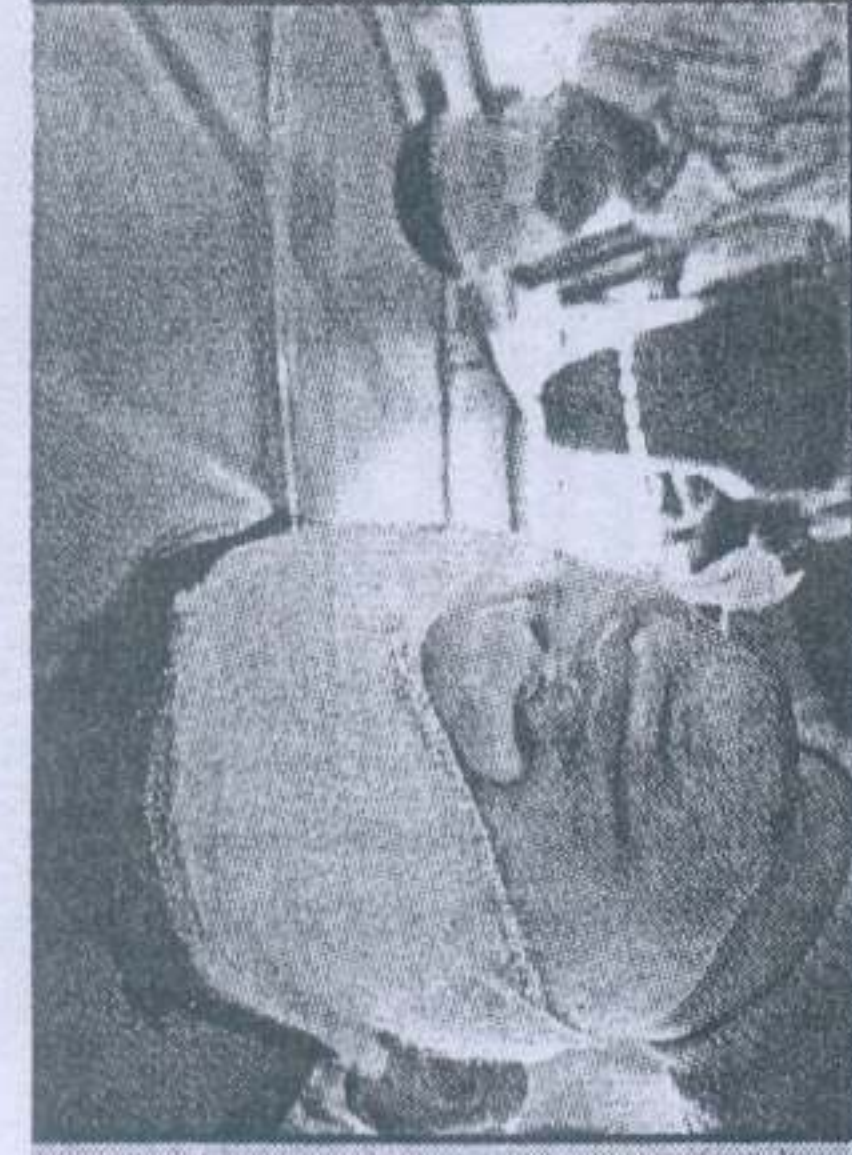
RAMESH & SUNIL

The two students of a local college are worried about their future. Having lost their vision, they are unable to read or write. They said they have not attended college after Holi and are not sure if they ever will. They were examined by doctors at a makeshift medical camp on Thursday, where govt officials promised to bear their medical treatment cost.



TASVEER

He was to appear for an entrance test in Nagpur, but his hopes have been shattered. "I can't read or write," he said, wearing a bucket of colour on my face. I closed my eyes. I have not been able to open them again," Tasveer (21) said. "There was irritation in both eyes. In a few minutes, it got worse."



Holi blinds a village



Over 70 people
lose eyesight
partly or fully after
playing Holi with
harmful colours

KAUSHIK ROY



MAAN SINGH

"My career has been ruined. I don't know who did it but whoever they are, they should be punished. My eyes are burning. I don't know if I will gain my vision fully. I am worried. I cannot sleep," he said. He is studying at a technical institute in Palwal.