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Schools urge kids to celebrate a green Diwali

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Calcutta: Several schools are sensitising children not to burst firecrackers, and if they choose to do so, they are being advised to use only green crackers.

In the last few days before the Diwali break, teachers are addressing students in assemblies and classrooms to raise awareness about the environmental harm caused by firecrackers.

Many of them are playing on the “pet sentiment” to drive home the point of saying “no” to firecrackers.

“We have been trying to sensitise the students about how the air pollution leads to coughing and health hazards in the long run,” said Nupur Ghosh, vice-principal, Mahadevi Birla World Academy.

Several schools have also been discussing the air quality index (AQI) with children.

Children are at an impres-

sionable age, and often, what teachers tell them has a lasting impact.

Some of the children go home and try to reason with their parents why they should not be bursting firecrackers, a veteran teacher said.

“No matter what happens around us, children should know what is right,” said Rupkatha Sarkar, principal, La Martiniere for Girls.

Teachers have observed that children who have pets at home are more sensitive than others.

“When we talk about noise pollution caused by firecrackers, we notice that children who have pets are aware that animals are scared of the noise. We tell them that elderly people and babies are also affected by the high noise levels,” said Satabdi Bhattacharjee, principal, The Newtown School.

The school has had sessions to tell children only to



Shoppers browse diyas and lights for Diwali at Chandni Market on Thursday.

Pictures by Sanat Kr Sinha

burst green crackers, if at all.

In 2023, the state government raised the permissible noise limit for green crackers from 90 decibels to 125, measured at a distance of 4 metres from the point of bursting.

“Green firecrackers, which are certified by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, are allowed,” said an official of the state pollution control board.

At many homes, animals look for cover and take shelter under sofas or in closets to get away from the noise. Even

stray animals are terrified and search for safe places to hide.

Class XI student Aaran Mitra’s perspective changed after he got a pet. “Earlier, I, too, would burst crackers, but now I don’t burst the ones with noise,” said the student of St James’ School who has a three-year-old Labrador.

“In some areas, the bursting of crackers starts even before Diwali and continues well after the festival. Cats and dogs get scared and look for closed spaces,” said Radhika Bose, managing trustee, Cape

Foundation, an animal rights organisation.

Across schools, a section of children who are more sensitive have expressed helplessness to teachers about the number of crackers in their areas.

“When they come back from the Diwali holidays, they tell how disappointed they were because of the noise levels. We tell them that every drop counts and they have fulfilled their responsibilities towards society,” said Sarkar.