

'Early detection helps differently-abled kids'

HT Correspondent

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MUMBAI: Dadar resident Bijal Dedhia, 32, is satisfied with her three-year-old son Bhavyanshu's progress. Bhavyanshu suffers from low vision and slow development.

"His comprehension and understanding of things is much better now. When he was just five months old, we saw that he would not make eye contact and did not move much. This is when we thought of starting early intervention for him," said Dedhia, who began speech, occupational and psychotherapy for her son.

Dedhia was one of the participants at the awareness walk organised on the occasion of World Disability Day on Saturday at Bandra by Ummeed, a non-profit organisation.

Ummeed works with children with developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy, mental retardation, learning disability, autism, and attention deficit disorder.

"We want to build awareness about why it is important to identify children with developmental problems early and seek professional help. It is also for all of us to understand that whether by birth, accident or old age, disability will affect all of us at some point in time," said Dr Vibha Krishnamurthy, director, Ummeed.



■ **Nine-year-old Saiffudin Bhatia, who suffers from hearing impairment, attends the awareness campaign organised by Ummeed, an NGO, at Carter Road, Bandra, on Saturday.** PUNEET CHANDHOK/HT

The walk started from Otters' Club in Bandra and ended at the amphitheatre on the Carter Road promenade. Nearly 100 families and their differently-abled children took part in the walk.

"There are multiple studies showing that early intervention in these children is very helpful, as maximum development of the brain happens till the age of six," said Dr Anjali Joshi, occupational therapist and director of training at Ummeed.

"My son's therapist told us that he can go to a regular school. However, there are very

few options for me if I want to put him in a regular school, which practices inclusive education. Also, the fees are exorbitant," said Shobha Tawade, 36, whose four-year-old son has low vision.

"It is true that there are only a handful of schools in this city which are open to taking these children, who can pick up things and learn from other children of their age by studying with them. There should be willingness from schools besides requirement of proper training for teachers to deal with such children," said Krishnamurthy.