

# Autistic kids to study in mainstream schools

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**SPECIAL TREATMENT:** President Pratibha Patil celebrates her 75th birthday with differently-abled children of special school, Tamanna, on Saturday

Neha Pushkarna | TNN

**New Delhi:** After remaining indifferent towards the education of the differently-abled, the government is finally planning to integrate children with special needs in the mainstream schools by making an amendment to the existing law.

Announcing this on Saturday, Union HRD minister Kapil Sibal said, "We are going to make an amendment in the law to integrate children with autism, cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities into the mainstream school system."

Sibal was speaking at the silver jubilee celebration of Tamana — an NGO for people with intellectual impairment, multiple disability and autism — held on Saturday. President Pratibha Devi Singh Patil was the chief guest at the event.

According to Sibal, there are nearly 70 million differently-abled people in India but yet there was no official record of their whereabouts. "Now we are committed to create a database of the differently-abled persons over the next few

years so that we can reach out to them to integrate them into the mainstream," Sibal said. Patil also showed confidence in the proposed amendment to integrate the special children. She called for proper training and skill development of the differently-abled children for their economic independence and rehabilitation. "Science and technology should be used for the rehabilitation and integration of such children," she said.

Patil, who turned 75 on Saturday, donated Rs 75,000 to the organization from her personal fund. Shyama Chona, founder of Tamana, said, "Children with special needs should have access to equal opportunity. I hope the doors of all schools will open for them. These children always need us."

Merry Barua, founder of Action for Autism and member of the national trust for cerebral palsy and autism, said the proposed amendment will be a step in the right direction, if it actually comes through.

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