

Student with visual impairment shines

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Siliguri: Jitnita Toppo, a visually-impaired girl from the Debijhora tea estate of Darjeeling, has scored an impressive 75.6 per cent in her Class X CBSE exams by writing her papers using a computer.

Jitnita is the daughter of day wage earners Raju and Albina Toppo. She has two sisters and a brother who works as a hotel waiter. Despite financial hardships, her family has always supported her education.

She joined Prerana Educational Centre, a centre for specially-abled children under the North Bengal Council for the Disabled, in 2016. She received foundational education, mobility training and exposure to computers and assistive technology there.

"Her learning ability was exceptional and she was determined to prove herself," said Archana Biswas, who is associated with Prerana. "She is the first visually challenged girl to pass the tenth standard



Jitnita Toppo types on a laptop

exams by only using computers," she added.

Jitnita was admitted to Kendriya Vidyalaya Sevoke Road in Class IV in 2019.

Recognising her typing skills, her mentors advocated that she write exams digitally. After persistent efforts, the school allowed her to use a computer for exams.

Her subjects were changed to home science and music after she struggled with science and math.

"The school initially lacked teachers for these subjects, so educators from Prerana stepped in to teach her, showcasing a strong model of collaborative and inclusive education," said a source.

"Securing permission

for her to write exams using a computer involved extensive documentation, delays and uncertainty. However, continued efforts by her teachers and support from school authorities ensured success," the source added.

Manish Kumar, the school's principal, and Shyam Kumar Sharma, who was in charge of the exam centre, helped her get approval.

Jitnita appeared for her home science exam on February 18. She was assisted by readers for the questions.

"Her technical skills are remarkable, that is, typing at a speed of 50 words per minute with 97 per cent accuracy. She even developed strategies like setting alarms on her computer to manage exam time efficiently," said Archana.

"She is an inspiration to visually-impaired students across Bengal and India. Her success highlights that with the right opportunities, determination and support, no barrier is too great," said Rita Sengupta, the founder of Prerana.