

June 15, 2015

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS, DATE: 15.6.2015, PAGE No: 3

# New World Opens Up for 1st Visually Challenged Who Cracked UPSC Exam

Express News Service

**Chennai:** City girl NL Zephine Beno who cracked the Civil Services last year securing the 343rd rank nationwide and stood first among all physically challenged selected candidates is heading to Delhi to begin service with the Indian Foreign Service (IFS).

Beno (25) holds the distinction of being the first fully visually-challenged woman candidate to overcome the challenge of the UPSC examination and come out successful.

"Thanks to the unwavering support of my parents who read to me everyday, I made it. I hope in the future, the government can make books and reading material widely accessible to other visually challenged students to help them in their UPSC dreams as well," said Beno, who holds Bache-



Zephine Beno (right) and her parents arrive at an IAS Academy in the city on Sunday | P JAWAHAR

lors and Masters degrees in English Literature and is now working towards a Phd degree from Bharathiyar University.

"We need to make Braille versions of the books she needs. She reads a book ten times," says Charles, her father. A resident of Villivakkam, Zephine recounted how

her civic consciousness could have led to nicknames from her friends, but eventually helped her reach where she was now. "My parents never asked me if I could do it. They believed I could, and I did," says Zephine who cracked the incredibly challenging examination in her

second attempt.

About to begin her service in the next 60 days, Zephine was nostalgic talking about her journey which began at Little Flower Convent where she did her schooling to where she was now, and how her parents read to her everyday encouraging her leaning towards news and affairs of the country. Beno who used Braille versions of books, newspapers and the occasional audio books, encouraged aspiring students to hone their analytical skills and make use of whatever resource they found available at hand, whether they were visually challenged or not.

"We should just use the tools at hand instead of complaining about lack of it," she said, encouraging students who faced physical difficulties like her not to look at exams as an insurmountable task.