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The winners of **The Telegraph She Awards** presented by I.I.H.M and powered by The Bhawanipur Education Society College and Kutchina posed for a memorable frame. (L-R) Srabani Sarkar Neogi (Social Work), Lorraine Mirza (Education), Anita Agnihotri (Literature), Priti A Sureka (Business Leadership), Priyanka Raja (Lifestyle Entrepreneur), Kheyali Dastidar (Theatre), Priti Patel (Dance), Ruby Palchoudhuri (She for Bengal), Tilotama Shome (Film), Iman Chakraborty (Music) and Dola Banerjee (Sports) made up this year's list of illustrious awardees. The glittering ceremony was held at JW Marriott Kolkata on March 26.

The Telegraph She Awards presented by I.I.H.M and powered by The Bhawanipur Education Society College and Kutchina celebrated the unputdownable spirit of 11 women from different walks of life. The eighth edition of the highly-anticipated award ceremony, held at JW Marriott Kolkata on March 26, recognised the exemplary contribution of women, having a Bengal connect, in the field of sports, music, education, social service, theatre, dance, films and more. The show was adroitly anchored by Tollywood actor Sauraseni Maitra. As the divas took the stage to be honoured, they reminded us all of their legacies and sent a strong wave of positivity and inspired every single person in the audience. Adding to the evening was a musical ensemble, Konkan Kanya Band, which filled the air with groovy Bollywood hits of the '70s and '80s. Narayan Sinha deserves mention for designing the sought-after trophy.



THE EIGHTH EDITION OF THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARDS PRESENTED BY I.I.H.M AND POWERED BY THE BHAWANIPUR EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE AND KUTCHINA HONoured 11 EXEMPLARY ACHIEVERS

consensus. I wish all the nominees and winners all the best

— **MADHU NEOTIA, ENTREPRENEUR**

I would like to thank **The Telegraph** for inviting me as the jury for the She Awards. I always support women empowerment and that's an important task for us at the German consulate general. I am really glad we chose many empowered women. It gave me scope to know more about them

— **BARBARA VOSS, CONSUL GENERAL OF GERMANY IN CALCUTTA**

I am glad I was invited to participate as a jury for the She Awards. Any effort to empower women is good and here we have a full range of women who have done great work in their field, whether it's art and culture, sports, dance or business. I know Calcutta has many talented women and bravo to **The Telegraph** and there should be more such events

— **DIDIER TALPAIN, CONSUL GENERAL OF FRANCE IN CALCUTTA**

It's always a pleasure to be one of the judges of the She Awards because I feel very enlightened when I see the nominations. It's so difficult to choose as each of their achievements is mind-blowing. Thanks to the She Awards organisers for bringing these talents to the forefront and honouring them. It's special for the women who are silently doing their work. So I really feel very proud to be one of the judges

— **TANUSREE SHANKAR, DANSEUSE**

It's a very encouraging and enriching experience as the jury of the I.I.H.M presents **The Telegraph** She Awards. I think this is the sixth year I am participating as a jury. The award recognises women from all walks of life and it's encouraging not just for the awardees but for all the women to get inspired and follow their hearts and passions

— **SANJUKTA BOSE, DIRECTOR OF I.I.H.M CALCUTTA**



Jury members (from left) Madhu Neotia, Tanusree Shankar and Barbara Voss were felicitated by Subomo Bose, founder and chairman of I.I.H.M. Sanjukta Bose and Didier Talpain were also part of the jury, apart from Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury



I have been associated with She Awards for a few years now. Memories of last year's jury meet are still fresh and I feel so excited to come here and participate as a jury. It's great to discuss and deliberate on the names. It's tough as well. Thanks to for inviting me to be a part of this process; it's a learning process for me. Good wishes to the winners and also to those who did not win

— **ANIRUDDHA ROY CHOWDHURY, FILMMAKER**

We received such an amazing nomination list for **The Telegraph** She Awards in all the categories and though it's the battle of who deserves and who doesn't deserve, but for me everyone is a winner. We debated on some names and even had disagreements in others but ultimately we all came to a



Sanjukta Bose



Didier Talpain



Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury

➔ CONTD ON P6

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SPORTS

DOLA BANERJEE



DOLA BANERJEE RECEIVES THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 FOR SPORTS FROM HARSHAVARDHAN NEOTIA, VANITA BAJORIA AND ARINDAM SIL

HER STORY: An Olympian archer, an Arjuna awardee and a Commonwealth gold medalist, Dola Banerjee has been synonymous with archery in Bengal. The first Indian sportswoman to win the World Archery Championship, the Baranagar girl, humble as ever, has had a phenomenal 20 years in her profession, which has seen her represent India at more than 50 competitions including two Olympic Games, three Asian Games, six World Championships, five Asian Championships, 11 World Cups, three European Grand Prix, 10 Asian Grand Prix, two SAF Games and one Commonwealth Games. She has won over 16 golds, three silvers and eight bronze medals for India. She was the first Indian archer to be ranked world No. 5 in July 2005. She also inspired her brother Rahul to pursue archery, now a

distinguished name on his own merit and they are now preparing future champions at their institute.

SHE SAID: As a child, I did not know what archery was until I witnessed sessions at the training camps in front of my house and began my journey from the Baranagar Archery Club. The cost factor in buying archery equipment was some mountains on the path to learning the sport. I first won the sub-junior nationals four times followed by five junior and senior titles. I was also the first one to grab a berth in the Junior World Championship. I moved on to represent India for several years and was also a part of the 2004 and 2008 Olympic teams where the women's team secured the sixth and seventh positions respectively. To my pleasure, I also won an individual gold in the World Cup in 2007. I want more players from Bengal to emerge who perform better than Dola Banerjee and they make the country proud. When I retired, I started training kids so that they could take my dreams forward. I thank 12 for giving me this award.

ANITA AGNIHOTRI RECEIVES THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 IN LITERATURE FROM MADHU NEOTIA AND ABHISHEK KAJARIA

HER STORY: She was just 12 years old when she started contributing regularly to the oldest children's magazine, *Sandesh*, edited by Satyajit Ray and Leela Mazumdar. Anita Agnihotri has been writing short stories, essays, and stories for young adolescents alongside poetry, since the 1980s. She also writes extensively on the reality of development and has authored several volumes of nonfiction essays. Her works have been translated into English and other Indian languages. Honoured twice by the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, the oldest literary body of Bengal, her notable works include *Mahanadi*, *Mahakantar*, *Mahulihar Din*, *Kaste*, *Lobonakto*, *Sreshtho Kobita* and *Sera Ponchasti Golpo*. An alumni of Presidency

College and University of Calcutta, Anita joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1980 and did a Masters in Development Economics from the University of East Anglia, UK. Having served 37 years in the Indian Civil Service, she retired as Social Justice and Empowerment Secretary to the Government of India.

SHE SAID: When I was a child of five, I could compose songs and stories of my own. I am glad that my readership takes me beyond the boundaries of India. This is absolutely delightful for any writer. Despite the pressure that comes with being a civil servant, I did manage to write because writing kept me going. I have spent around 30 years travelling across India so that I can highlight those voices which are not normally heard. I am very happy that I am receiving this recognition today along with so many distinguished women.



LITERATURE

ANITA AGNIHOTRI



DANCE

PRITI PATEL

PRITI PATEL ACCEPTS THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 FOR DANCE FROM RITIKA KARNANI, TANUSREE SHANKAR AND RICHA SHARMA

HER STORY: Through her untiring efforts she has tried to preserve the essence and authenticity of Manipuri dance. Priti Patel was initiated into the dance form at an early age by the legendary Guru Bipin Singh and the Jhaveri Sisters. In order to take this art form forward she established the Anjika Centre for Manipuri Dance and Movement Therapy in Calcutta and Imphal under the guidance of Maharajkumari Binodini Devi and other legendary gurus. She went on to present pathbreaking choreographies in India and all over the world. A recipient of Sangeet Natak Akademi, Priti has been a recipient of senior scholarships from Ministry of Culture, Government of India for classical Manipuri Dance. As a Fulbright Fellow, she also went to the USA for further research in Dance and Movement Therapy. She has served on numerous committees

of Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Prasara Bharati.

SHE SAID: I started dancing when I was 12 and the journey since then has been a tremendous one. I am glad to say that I have had the full support of my family and mentors. Manipuri is a state of rich cultural heritage that dates back to thousands of years. I learned how to combine the beautiful art forms of Thang Ta, Lai-Haroba, Sankirtana and Rasleela, from my gurus. Later on, I discovered that the gentle movements of Manipuri dance were also very therapeutic. This discovery turned out to be pathbreaking when I joined the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy as the art form helped patients to have better coordination. Through my training centres in Calcutta and Imphal, I want to teach the art form to passionate individuals and help specially-abled adults and children with movement therapy. I have no words to thank **The Telegraph** for bestowing this award on me. I thank She Awards 2024 from the bottom of my heart.

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THEATRE
KHEYALI
DASTIDAR



KHEYALI DASTIDAR RECEIVES THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 FOR THEATRE FROM JUNE AND RITESH AGARWAL

HER STORY: Stage is her "praan". As an actor, director and playwright, Kheyali Dastidar considers the stage to be her home. Daughter of well-known actors and playwrights Jochhon and Chandra Dastidar, she started acting at the age of 10 and since then has made a mark in the industry with over 25 plays such as *Uttorpurush*, *Sati*, *Banjara*, *Mukhomukhi* among others. She joined the theatre group Charbak 35 years ago and has written and directed original plays in Bengali. Though acting off the stage was not in her initial plan, she made a foray into TV and is acknowledged as the first star of Bengali television when *Tero Parban* was broadcast as the

first serial in Bengali. She has three published novels to her name.

SHE SAID: My journey as a theatre artiste started when I was an infant. In fact, I was born in a family with a theatre background and my parents were stalwarts as writers, actors and directors. Despite my passion in acting from an early age, at one point of time I decided to opt for a job in an advertising agency or somewhere else. That is exactly when *Tero Parban*, the first Bengali serial, came into the limelight in which I had acted, and my life changed. As I grew up, I explored my flair in writing through screenplays, serial writings, telefilms and ultimately novels. I also wrote and directed plays and I believe my life is always rooted in theatre. I think I will pursue it till my death. This recognition is very heartfelt to me and I thank **t2** and **The Telegraph** She Awards for it.

IMAN CHAKRABORTY ACCEPTS THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 FOR MUSIC FROM AKHIL MAHESHWARI, DIDIER TALPAIN AND MAINAK BHAMIK

HER STORY: Besides Rabindrasangeet, Iman Chakraborty is trained in Hindustani Classical music and folk songs from different parts of India. The multitalented singer shot to fame in 2016 for her song *Tumi jake bhalobasho* from *Prakton* and went on to win a national award for Best Female Playback Singer. She pours life into every word and never fails to feel the pulse of her audience during stage shows. Growing up, Iman was heavily influenced by the literary works of Rabindranath Tagore. Her album *Boshite Dio Kachhe* immediately distinguished her as a fresh

voice. Following this, she delivered back-to-back hit songs for several Bengali films. Besides films, Iman has worked on music albums and is a mentor on a TV music reality show.

SHE SAID: I was born in Liluah and started learning music from the age of three. My mother was my first teacher and I used to try and copy the way she sang. Strangely, nobody except my mother was a musician in my family but everyone loves music. I am extremely grateful to them for supporting me in my initial days and continuing it. Thank you so much **t2** for giving me such an honour among such talented individuals. Whoever I am is completely because of my family. I have a fantastic group of friends and a lovely husband. As a musician, I always want to remain a student of music and remain relevant.



MUSIC
IMAN
CHAKRABORTY



EDUCATION
LORRAINE
MIRZA

LORRAINE MIRZA RECEIVES THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 IN EDUCATION FROM SHIBANI SHAH, BARBARA VOSS AND IMRAN ZAKI

HER STORY: She has been a dedicated member of the educational fraternity for over 45 years and believes that every child is a gem and it is the duty of educators to polish them and make them shine. An alumni of Loreto House, Middleton Row and Sophia College Bombay, Lorraine Mirza started her career in Harrow Hall School and then joined The Park English School as head of the Science Department. At St. Thomas' Boys School, Kidderpore, she served for 24 years and as a founder principal she established the Pailan World School, Kolkata, The Taurian World School, Ranchi, and Gems Cambridge International School. She was also the Principal of La Martiniere for Girls, Calcutta where she had the privilege of hosting Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State and William Offelein, the pilot who took Sunita

Williams into space. Presently, she is the academic head for Don Bosco School, Kharagpur, and is also a member of the advisory board. She has authored several series of mathematics and science textbooks and has a passion for travelling.

SHE SAID: It has been a wonderful journey of over 45 years that I have been interacting with my students and teachers. My first school that I joined was Harrow Hall School, followed by Park English School. Decades later, I was invited by the Bishop to join La Martiniere for Girls and I was to retire in three years' time. But the Bishop wanted me to bring the school from rank 23 in the education records to rank one, which fortunately I did. We received several awards during that time including **The Telegraph** School Award. I thank **The Telegraph** She Awards for bestowing this great honour on me and I hope that our students will do very well and will excel in the world of tomorrow.

→ CONTD ON P10

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MUSIC

Mumbai-based Konkan Kanya Band kicked off **The Telegraph** She Awards 2024 evening at JW Marriott Kolkata with a tribute to the doyen of playback singing, Lata Mangeshkar. The multi-genre group comprising six versatile female vocalists and musicians — Arundhati Tendulkar, Deepti Rege, Madhura Paranjape, Veda Nerurkar, Sanchita Garge and Jui Bhagwat — created a beautiful

symphony of yesteryear hits with a fusion of western music and Indian folk. The ensemble started off with a soft number, *Piya tohse naina lage re*. The only male member of the band, Raviraj Koltharkar, director and composer, who supported them on the keyboard, joined them in the second song *Ek pyaar ka nagma hai*. The tempo of the evening went up several notches higher when peppy numbers like *Hai apna dil to awara*, *Shola jo bhadke*, *Monica oh my darling*, filled the venue, making the audience hum and sway. What makes the band stand out from other similar musical groups is their versatility, their style of singing and great symmetry. "Performing in Calcutta at the She



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BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

PRITI A. SUREKA



PRESENTS
The Telegraph
SHE AWARD

PRITI A. SUREKA RECEIVES THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 IN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP FROM AMALIN DATTA, KIRAN UTTAM GHOSH AND KANAKLATA DATTA

HER STORY: Priti A. Sureka is celebrated for her dynamic leadership and entrepreneurial acumen. A well-known name among the top women corporate leaders of the country, she is a key member of the core advisory team of the Rs 30,000-crore diversified business conglomerate, Emami Group. She is the whole-time director of Emami Ltd., the flagship FMCG company of the group, and is also the non-executive chairperson of CRI Ltd., the second-largest ballpoint tip manufacturer globally. As a business leader, she passionately advocates the cause of women empowerment and is actively involved in the group's CSR work, particularly those related to girl child education. She is a member of the

FMCG sub-committee of FICCI and vice president of MCCI. She was felicitated by CII in 2023 with the prestigious Corporate Woman Leader award in the consumer products category.

SHE SAID: I started my career pretty early. Informally, at the age of around 13 with my dad. Then formally, in 1996. It has been a journey full of ups and downs, success and failures, and most importantly, grit, determination, resolution and an entire ethos of championing womanhood, of being a good and inspirational beacon for women entrepreneurs. I am grateful for the opportunity provided by the universe to be this successful in the business world. The balancing act required for women is a little more, given the fact that they have to traverse the work life and personal life in a perfect way, in a way that is accepted. Thank you **The Telegraph** She Awards.

PRITYANKA RAJA RECEIVES THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 IN LIFESTYLE ENTREPRENEUR CATEGORY FROM RUKMINI MAITRA AND MOHIT MORE

HER STORY: Priyanka Raja is the co-founder of Experimenter, one of India's leading art galleries that is considered a pacesetter in the industry. Over the last 15 years, the gallery has garnered tremendous critical acclaim through the artists it represents and the sustained impact it has made in the global art industry, leading Priyanka and her husband and co-founder Prateek, to feature as the only Indian gallerists, in the prestigious ArtReview Power 100 list of the most powerful individuals in the art world globally since 2020. Originally established as a single space in Calcutta in 2009, Priyanka

alongside her team now runs three galleries, an artist residency, a foundation and a publishing wing between Calcutta and Mumbai. A passionate supporter of the visual arts, she is often involved in early growth phase advisory roles of several arts organisations and also sits on the selection committees of leading art fairs such as Art Dubai and Armory New York.

SHE SAID: Thank you **The Telegraph** for this great honour. Experimenter Gallery was conceived by my husband and me, about 15 years ago with the idea of creating a platform for art that is constantly pushing the boundaries of visual lives, art that is representative of different backgrounds of the political and social flux that we find ourselves in, art that is fearless, boundary-less and crucial to the globe, especially at

these times. What started as a single space in Calcutta in 2009, representing three artists, today finds itself in two different cities, three galleries, the residency — the foundation, and we globally represent 30 Indian international artists. We enjoyed this journey immensely, with incredible friendships with our artists and colleagues in the industry. A moment such as the She Award is a moment of gratitude and to think of those who have been a part of our story and have been the most important pillars, I have to mention my late father-in-law Dilip Raja, our mothers Shikha Bhattacharya and Nandita Raja, without whose deep belief in us we wouldn't be where we are. Our amazing children, Kaavin and Kayaan, and lastly, my closest confidante, my husband Prateek, for making learning the root of it all.



PRESENTS
The Telegraph
SHE AWARD

LIFESTYLE ENTREPRENEUR

PRITYANKA RAJA

SOCIAL WORK

SRABANI SARKAR NEOGI



PRESENTS
The Telegraph
SHE AWARD

SRABANI SARKAR NEOGI RECEIVES THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 IN SOCIAL WORK FROM GARGEE ROY CHOWDHURY, DEVANSH JHAJHARIA AND MINU BUDHIA

HER STORY: Srabani Sarkar Neogi's journey in social work began in her early years. Recognising the disparity between her inclusive home and the unjust world outside, she was driven to foster equality wherever she went. In school, she initiated 'Night Class Champions', teaching street children. In college, she delved into student politics, shaping her ideological foundation. As a Masters's student, she dedicated herself to Nari Nirjatan Protirodh Manch, advocating for women's rights. Her commitment to gender and child rights led her to work across institutional and non-institutional settings, addressing issues such as sexual trafficking, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS. Her experiences at organisations like Sanlaap and Apne Aap shaped her belief in a rights-based approach to social development. She founded South Kolkata Hamari Muskan (SKHM) in 2009, a

frontline NGO focused on equality and equity.

SHE SAID: South Kolkata Hamari Muskan started work in 2009 in the Bowbazar red light areas, and in 2016 it started work at Sonagachi, too. We think prostitution is a gross violation of human rights. The work that we do is mainly divided into two categories — one is gatekeeping to prevent the second generation of prostitution and the other is exit where we work on alternative livelihood. At present, we have 240 kids who are studying here. We feel they will go ahead with education, do any other work in life other than prostitution and become a part of mainstream society. There are about 80 mothers who are working with us now. We started with 16-17 kids, and out of that, 14 of them are studying in colleges. Our dropout rate is very low. Many of the mothers have also come out of prostitution and they are trying to now stay outside of the red light areas. I am very thankful to **The Telegraph** for selecting me and for honouring the work of South Kolkata Hamari Muskan.

→ CONTD ON P12

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TILLOTAMA SHOME RECEIVES THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 IN FILMS FROM MANIT BAJORIA, KOEL MALLICK AND MIMI CHAKRABORTY

HER STORY: Tillotama Shome is a rare actor who can embrace any role with effortless ease and empathy. She is one of the most assured and dependable actors in Indian cinema today. With theatre being the bedrock of her acting career and her early years with this medium being spent on New York City, she attracted attention instantly with her feature film debut, playing the effervescent Alice in Mira Nair's seminal film *Monsoon Wedding*. Memorable roles in films like *Gangor*, *Shanghai* and *Glass*, among many others, followed, establishing her as an actor who could make any role her own. The last few years have marked a distinct turn in her career, with Tilly — as she is popularly known among friends and colleagues — delivering acts of both impact and import on screens big and small, from *Sir* to *The Night Manager*, *Delhi Crime 2* to *Last Stories 2*. Her upcoming work *Paatal Lok Season 2* awaits release.

SHE SAID: I was born in Calcutta. Since baba was in the Air Force, summer holidays were spent in Calcutta, Victoria Memorial, Fort William and the walk from Elgin Road, where my amma and dada lived, to Victoria Memorial... that area and the Rabindra Sadan metro, the crossings between these places is what my childhood memories are made of. Mira Nair was the most perfect debut because she introduced me to the idea of a film being a collaborative process. To work on films is like an orchestra coming together in that one moment after intensive rehearsal between action and cut. It is like an aikale and exhale done together by a huge group of people, which for me is magical. I am grateful for the influx of this kind of work opportunity because when I started the journey there were just a few independent films which one had to wait for, for years. But today, to be able to have this volume of work is very heartening but my mind is still chained for more. I am very grateful to The Telegraph for this award. It means specially more to have my parents witness this. They live in Calcutta. They are so proud of me, not because I have won this award but because they really have been huge supporters. I want to thank the jury and all of you because I have never won an award in Calcutta. It really means a lot.



RUBY PALCHOUDHURI RECEIVES THE TELEGRAPH SHE AWARD 2024 IN SHE FOR BENGAL CATEGORY FROM SATNAM SINGH AHLUWALIA, RITUPARNA SENGUPTA AND SHIBOPROSAD MUKHERJEE

HER STORY: Ruby Palchoudhuri is a queen of art and craft facilitation and curator of exhibitions across the globe. She is the vice-president of the Crafts Council of India, president emerita of the Crafts Council of West Bengal, and a vibrant figure in the renaissance of craft forms for many years. She has been conferred with many prestigious awards in India and abroad, including the Kamala Sarason from the Crafts Council of India in 2004, 'Palme des Arts' by the ambassador of France in India on behalf of the Government of France and 'Palme Academique' from the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government of France in 1998 and a Personal Medallion from M. Mitterand, president of French Republic in 1987, to name a few. She has led many teams of artisans and exposed them and the art to international audiences. She led a team of artisans to build a clay image of Goddess Durga at the Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, in October and the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff for the Wales Puja Committee in November 2002.

SHE SAID: I was overwhelmed to see and watch the beauty of the loom, its rhythm and the poetic aspect of the loom. With whatever gift I have, I have tried to promote the makers who create this beauty around us and I have tried to use my creativity in whatever way I can to provoke these wonderful people, the weavers and the embroiders that I see around me. I have tried my best to revive our ancient tradition, whether it is embroidery, block printing or weaving. Block printing has been a tradition right from the beginning. It goes back to the 3rd century BC. We produced the first sari for Air India as their costume. Also, I am very proud of the Baluchari weave, which I have worked with Ali Hasan, the famous weaver of Benaras. So these are the kinds of things that I am very proud of. Also, I have worked with several other weavers and tried to revive the old borders of Shantipur and Phulera. The weavers were so imaginative that they used to produce borders of kalka and zari, which means replicating the pattern of the offering of flowers to the Ganges. I am very grateful to The Telegraph for giving me the She Award, but as I said, I have only been a facilitator and have only tried to help those people who needed help to give expression to their creativity.

