FT Prime Celebrates Women’s Excellence in Business & Innovation

Our Bureau

Mumbai: “I would like to touch upon two emotions which trouble women and come in the way of their growth: guilt and lack of self-confidence. I urge women to battle these emotions and change the scripts that were handed over to them in their early years,” said Anu Aga, former chairperson, Thermax, while delivering her keynote address at the ET Prime Women Leadership Awards (presented by Accenture) held in Mumbai on the evening of March 28, 2019.

This was the inaugural edition of the awards, which have been instituted by the new members-only, all-digital offering of The Economic Times, ET Prime. ET Prime is a pioneering product that is predicated on a completely new business model and the ET Prime Women Leadership Awards too is the first-ever awards dedicated only to women leaders of corporate India.

The awards ceremony saw a turnout of more than 500 invitees across top Indian corporates.

The vision of the awards is to set a benchmark for success in business and inspire millions of women to move forward and yield the bounty of excellence. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, chairperson of Biocon, won the flagship award Businesswoman of the Year (public co), while Anu Aga was conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award for her leadership role at Thermax earlier, and for her philanthropic work after she retired from an executive position at the company.

A Special Mention Award was conferred on the late Meera Sanjay, former CEO of RBS India.

The inaugural edition of the awards had a distinguished jury comprising Aisha De Sequeira (head of investment banking – India, Morgan Stanley), Debjani Ghosh (president, Nestle), Deep Kalra (group CEO Make My Trip.com), Gautam Sinha (CEO, Times Internet), Kaku Nakate (India country head, Bank of America), Meena Ganesh (managing director, Portex Medical), Naina Lal Kidwai (chairman, Alhico Capital India and also the jury chair) and Rekha M Menon (chairman, Accenture India). The jury debated the candidacy of about 70 women across 11 categories. The ET Prime editorial team and the awards knowledge partners, Accord, used financial and corporate-governance filters to reduce the long list to the shortlist of 70, which was handed over to the jury. The ET Prime editorial team and the knowledge partners also adjudicated three winners in “emerging” categories.

The awards ceremony featured two panel discussions. The first of these was titled Leadership Playbook for India Inc: Creating Trillion-dollar Enterprises. Aisha de Sequeira said: “Companies will need to invest in technology and they will need access to capital, because many of these models are unprofitable to begin with but the potential to scale is huge.” Kiranjit Mazumdar-Shaw added that the success of Apple and Amazon show that a strong foundation in digital technology was crucial to scale up to a trillion-dollar business. “We need to think about education to take our country forward,” Kishan Fernandes, CEO, IPM Capital, said at the panel, “It will be as transformative as technology.”

Gautam Sinha, CEO, Times Internet, said that while technology will help compress the time taken by companies to hit the market, the fundamentals of building a big company will remain the same: culture, people, and customer experience.”

The second panel was on Developing Inclusive Frameworks to Drive Innovation. Speaking on the panel Rekha Menon said: “The only way for companies to survive is to innovate, and to innovate you have to have an inclusive workforce. So for me having an inclusive workforce is not merely the right thing to do. It is the right business thing to do.”

“We need to remove the mindset from society that women are not suited to entrepreneurship because they need to settle down,” Meena Ganesh, said at the panel.

Geeta Manjunath, founder, Nirmal Health Analytix, advised women to follow their dreams. “My personal mantra is, learn something new every day and remember that whatever happens is for the good,” she said.

The curtains went down on the awards ceremony with an electric performance by the rock band Dharam V Heledoed.