

## President confers Nari Shakti awards on 44 women

New Delhi: President Ram Nath Kovind presented the Nari Shakti Puraskar to 44 women, including an acid attack survivor and India's first woman marine pilot on Friday.

The awards were given at a special ceremony organised at the Rastrapati Bhawan in the presence of Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi.

To acknowledge women's achievements, the Ministry of Women and Child Development confers Nari Shakti Puraskar on women and institutions in recognition of their relentless service towards the cause of women empowerment and social welfare.

The 44 awardees include **DRDO Scientist Ipsita Biswas**, India's first woman marine pilot Reshma Nilofer Naha, expert on subjects of agro-biodiversity Rahibai Soma Popere, acid attack survivor Pragya Prasun, woman commando trainer Seema Rao and motivational speaker Sister Shivani, among others.

The Nari Shakti Puraskar, the highest civilian honour for women, has also been awarded to a One Stop Centre (OSC), Lucknow, Qasab-Kutch Craftswomen Producer and Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department of Tamil Nadu.

"All the awardees are a face of change, reflecting the shift in the status of women in the country, from women development to women-led development. I congratulate all of them for their achievements," Gandhi said.

"No field has been left untouched, where women have not left their indelible mark, making women the leading force of our development trajectory. I appreciate the contribution of each one of them and hope that they will continue working for the cause of a better society," she said.

This year, among the awardees are scientists, entrepreneurs, environmentalists, social workers, farmers, artists, masons, woman marine pilot, woman commando trainer, journalists and filmmakers and many others.

The awardees said they were honoured to have been conferred such a prestigious award and vowed to take the cause for which they were awarded forward.

Popere, a self-made expert in the subject of agro-biodiversity landrace conservation, embarked on the first train journey of her life to collect the Nari Shakti award.

The 43-year-old expert, also known as the seed mother, said she has conserved indigenous landraces of 17 different crops by combining agriculture with technology.

Prasun, who is an acid attack survivor, said she was attacked when she was 23-years-old, 12 days after marriage. After undergoing the trauma of the attack, she decided to help survivors and started an organisation to aid their medical treatment.

"This award will help more acid attack survivors realise that they are not alone in their struggles and aid them," she said. PTI