

# POWER & PANACHE





It was that time of the year when the Grand Jury met to score, assess and decide the winners for the Hotelier India Awards 2023 to be held in December.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO



➡ L-R Standing: Syed Ishtiyaq, Puneet Mehta, Sudeep Jain, Anuraag Bhatnagar, Jatin Khanna, Jaideep Dang, Akhil Arora, Zubin Saxena, Ranjit Batra, Vijay Thacker; Sitting: Dilip Puri, Vikram Verma, Souvagya Mohapatra, Prabhat Verma, Rajneesh Malhotra, Ranju Alex, Bibhor Srivastava, Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, Puneet Dhawan, Vikram Cotah



Setting the stage for the GMR Aerocity Presents Hotelier India Awards 2023 Powered by Jaquar & Company Private Limited and Howell Protection Systems India Pvt Ltd, the Grand Jury Meet at JW Marriott Sahar Mumbai was all things hospitality.

**SETTING THE STAGE**

Delivering the welcome note, Bibhor Srivastava, Managing Director, ITP Media India, thanked the jury for being present and said that the team got over 1,700 nominations for the 14th edition of the award, which was a record number.

“The jury has always been very special and we have fabulous leaders here with us to help make the right choice. This time, we have 18 categories as we have removed a few categories based on feedback from the last year to make sure that we have a very crisp awards’ show. For each category, we are looking at a top five list. Only for the GM of the year, the shortlisted GMs will be interviewed by the jury on the day of the awards, December 11, 2023, and the winner for this coveted category will be based on that,” he explained.

**GROUPING TEAMS**

To screen the massive number of nominations, the Hotelier India team divided the jury into three groups. Group One to judge the ‘Luxury to Upper Upscale hotels’; the jury for that included Anuraag Bhatnagar, Chief Operating Officer, The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts; Chef Sanjeev Kapoor; Ranju Alex, Area Vice President - South Asia Marriott International; Vijay Thacker, Director, Horwath India; Prabhat Verma, Executive Vice President - Operations, IHCL; and Rajneesh Malhotra, COO, Chalet Hotels.

The jury part of Group Two to judge ‘Upscale to Midscale hotels’



➔ Bibhor Srivastava, MD, ITP Media India



➔ The Grand Jury assemble at JW Marriott's Royal Ballroom

included Jaideep Dang, Managing Director, Hotels and Hospitality Group, JLL; Jatin Khanna, Chief Executive Officer, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts; Puneet Dhawan, Senior Vice President Operations - India & South Asia, Accor; Ranjit Batra, President, Hospitality Management, Panchshil Realty; Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG); and Zubin Saxena, Senior Vice President and Country Head - India Hilton.

Group Three to judge 'Economy to Budget hotels' included Akhil Arora, Chief Executive Officer, Espire Hospitality Group; Dilip Puri, Founder & CEO, Indian School of Hospitality; Souvagya Mohapatra, Managing Director (India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan), Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts; Vikram Cotah, Chief Executive Officer, GRT Hotels & Resorts; and Vineet Verma, Director, Brigade Hospitality as the jury.

### DIGITISING SCORES

To ensure that the awards have the highest level of transparency and authenticity, the jury was explained the scoring procedures by Amritha Mohan, Event Marketing Manager, ITP Media.



**Peppered with animated discussions, debates, laughter and cheer, the tone of the sessions set the right mood for the awards in December.**

The ITP team highlighted that entries must be judged on four parameters. Entries must be judged on innovation, performance, insight, and business ethics, how nominees met these challenges and prevailed, creativity in matching business resilience with guest experience and sustainability, people management, judicious use of resources and promoting team spirit during tough times.

Post this, the three groups of the jury were led to their respective rooms by the ITP staff where the judging process started. Peppered with animated discussions, debates, laughter and cheer, the tone of the sessions set the right mood for the awards in December. Post the lunch



Amritha Mohan, Event Marketing Manager, ITP Media



Jury members from Group One assessing the nominations





➔ Group Two members judging the entries, assisted by Team ITP Media India



➔ Group Three members at the jury table with ITP Media India team



➔ Kunal Chauhan, GM, JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, with Bibhor Srivastava



➔ Rajneesh Malhotra, Souvagya Mohapatra, Puneet Dhawan

break, the jury regrouped for the next half. During the break, the Hotelier India team also managed to do the cover shoot capturing the great camaraderie between the members. The ever-enthusiastic Chef Sanjeev Kapoor was also captured taking a selfie in the break. Post lunch, the jury resumed the judging process, and finally managed to shortlist the winners.

**JUDGE SPEAK**

As the esteemed panel of judges sifted through hundreds of nominations to brainstorm, and select the winners, which will be announced at our coveted Awards' Night on December 11, 2023, here is what some of the jury members had to say at the meet.

Jaideep Dang, Managing Director, Hotels and Hospitality Group, JLL, opined, "I am delighted to be one of the jurors at the finest awards and the 1,700 plus nominations, show the kind of coverage that this award has. It is a privilege to be part of this jury panel to adjudicate one of the finest talents across age groups, across categories, across cities, across geographies. What a fantastic show they always put together and this was the best yet!" Akhil Arora, Chief





➔ Akhil Arora, Vikram Cotah, Prabhat Verma, Souvagya Mohapatra, Vineet Verma

## CATEGORIES FOR THE HOTELIER INDIA AWARDS 2023

- Chef of the Year
- IT Person of the Year
- Chief Engineer of the Year
- Marketing & PR Person of the Year
- Director of Rooms of the Year
- Procurement Person of the Year
- Front Office Manager of the Year
- Project Person of the Year
- F&B Manager of the Year
- Revenue Manager of the Year
- GM of the Year
- Salesperson of the Year
- Housekeeper of the Year
- Unsung Hero of the Year
- HR Person of the Year
- Wellness Person of the Year
- Hotel Manager of the Year
- Young Hotelier of the Year



➔ Syed Ishtiyaq, Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, Bibhor Srivastava and Puneet Mehta

Executive Officer, Espire Hospitality Group, added, "It was a great process and it was a privilege to be part of the jury this year. We have received a record number of nominations, which is a record high for this award. I congratulate all the winners who will be selected by the jury today. It's a wonderful reflection of how the industry is growing and how we reward and recognize our talent."

### FRATERNITY FEELS

The jury meet is also a great example of how the fraternity is coming together in recognising colleagues. Prabhat Verma, Executive Vice President - Operations, IHCL, said, "It is a delightful moment for me to participate in the jury for the awards for so many categories. To bring in stalwarts in the industry together to judge the nominees is a great idea. This is a great example of the fraternity coming together and recognising our colleagues."

Zubin Saxena, Senior Vice President, and Country Head - India Hilton, added, "The quality of candidates has been exceptional this time, as always, and we really look forward to welcoming and awarding some of the brightest new talents of tomorrow."



➔ Sheetal Sadana, Vinodini Rao, Indrajeet Saoji, Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, Anuraag Bhatnagar, Dilip Puri, Souvagya Mohapatra



Jatin Khanna, Chief Executive Officer, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, averred, "I think it was the day of a lot of conversations and laughter and some good talent discussions."

Rajneesh Malhotra, COO, Chalet Hotels, had a fun take on the process. "As always, it is fantastic meeting industry leaders and colleagues. We have been friends for a long time and the event is very well organized. It's always a pleasure to be here, although we spent gruelling hours sifting through 1,700 applications."

**IN HIGH SPIRITS**

Playing the perfect host, Kunal Chauhan, General Manager, JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, said, "It is an absolute pleasure to be the venue partner for the jury meet of the Hotelier India Awards for the third year in running. It is an event filled with passion. We get to meet a lot of people who have been recognised for exceptional quality work and the passion on the part of the judges and jury makes it an incredible event."

Commenting on the process itself, Ranju Alex, Area Vice President - South Asia, Marriott International, said, "I think it is highly digitalized this time, which is very different and it cuts down on any kind of manual interven-



➡ Vijay Thacker, Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, Dilip Puri



➡ Zubin Saxena, Vikram Verma, Rajneesh Malhotra



➡ Ranju Alex



➡ It's a wrap - Chef Sanjeev Kapoor takes a happy group selfie





➔ General Manager of JW Marriott Sahar Kunal Chauhan with his team, along with Bibhor Srivastava, MD, ITP Media India



➔ Delectable spread of food dished out by the F&B Team of the hotel

tion or manual mistake. The camaraderie, the sense of competition, the detailing with which we are going through every single candidate is also very exciting and endearing.”

Chef Sanjeev Kapoor said, “Hotelier India has the unique ability to bring the best out of the hospitality industry by bringing them under one roof - Hotelier India Awards. They meet, they laugh, they party, get recognised and get awarded to motivate the entire hospitality industry.”

And that summarises the spirit of the jury meeting that concluded on a high note. And now all eyes are on the big event - the coveted Hotelier India Awards' Night on December 11, 2023, that will be held at JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity. [H](#)