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BIG INTERVIEW
JOHN SPENCER,
CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER,
THE KARMA GROUP

Picking Winners

TOP-NOTCH INDUSTRY EXPERTS CAME TOGETHER AT THE 12TH HOTELIER INDIA AWARDS' GRAND JURY MEET TO SELECT THE COUNTRY'S BRIGHTEST HOSPITALITY TALENT ACROSS 20 CATEGORIES

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BY VINITA BHATIA

Jaquar
PRESENTS
Hotelier AWARDS 2021

Celebrating Excellence

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Awards Night Host Hotel: **JW MARRIOTT**
NEW DELHI KERALA

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COVER STORY

2020 was an extremely challenging year for the hospitality industry, and it required all stakeholders' unwavering focus, understanding and collaboration to ensure their respective businesses prevailed. The pandemic related lockdowns and travel restrictions altered the sector's shape significantly, restricting customer footfalls.

Most professionals had to navigate the process of adapting to a new normal while balancing the creative, technical, and corporate resources to deliver the best business outcome. They had to change their priorities, plans and campaigns for the year as they explored and adopted several initiatives to drive non-room revenues.

Many industry stakeholders experienced unprecedented scenarios requiring set of skills that had no genesis in their erstwhile education or existing experience. In addition to focusing on things they could control, they had to quicken their learning curve – and this occurred across the board.

Against this backdrop, the 12th Hotelier India Awards is all set to rejuvenate the industry's spirit, which is working aggressively towards business recovery. Sunjae Sharma, VP & Country Head-India of Hyatt Hotels Corporation has seen the platform grow since its inaugural edition in 2008. While every year, the Awards celebrate excellence across the industry, it has a different hue this year.

"The industry is coming together to celebrate the spirit of collaboration, courage and care, which has been demonstrated by the industry since 2020. Whether you are an entrepreneur, or a large entity, this platform appreciates and acknowledges the ef-

Over 1,400 nominations were received pan-India for the 12th Hotelier India Awards.



Bibhor Srivastava, MD, ITP Media India said that true to its ethos of championing the sector, the 12th Hotelier India Awards is a celebration of the industry, by the industry.



Vinita Bhatia, Editor, Hotelier India outlined how the process for the Hotelier India Awards began in October 2021, when 20 categories and qualifying criteria were finalised.



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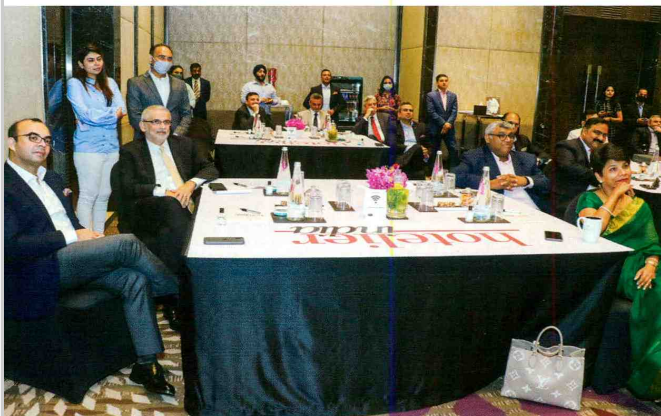
➤ Parvez Amin, President (Sales & Marketing) and Dev Malhotra, Group Advisor - Sales & Marketing, Jaquar Group shared their delight at being associated with the Hotelier Awards.

ports of an industry that worked towards re-establishing the trust of guests and colleagues through the experiences we have to offer. The Hotelier India Awards is a great way to collectively celebrate the industry's resilience and solidarity to bring travel back to India," Sharma emphasised.

Zubin Saxena, MD and VP - Operations, South Asia of Radisson Hotel Group added that being the voice of India's hospitality industry, the 12th Hotelier India Awards would play a significant role in lauding the talent that's powering the recovery of India's hospitality space, thus leading to a positive change. Anuraag Bhatnagar, COO of The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts pointed out that the one thing the pandemic has not been able to crush is the resilience of the hospitality industry and its spirit to find opportunity in every adversity. "12th Hotelier India Awards recognises this indomitable spirit shown by the industry, providing hope and encouragement to those that believe in the hospitality industry, and for for whom this is more than a job," he noted.

MEET THE JURY

NAME	DESIGNATION	COMPANY
Ajay Bakaya	MD	Sarovar Hotels and Resorts
Anil Chadha	Chief Executive	ITC Hotels
Anuraag Bhatnagar	COO	The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts
Anshu Sarin	CEO -South Asia	Keys Hotels
Kapil Chopra	Founder and CEO	The Postcard Hotels
Mandeep Lamba	President-South Asia	HVS Anarock
Nirupa Shankar	Director	Brigade Hospitality
Puneet Dhawan	Sr Vice President of Operations - India & South Asia	Accor
Ranjit Batra	President, Hospitality Management,	Panchshil Realty
Ranju Alex	Market VP - West India	Marriott International
Sanjay Sethi	CEO	Chalet Hotels
Sanjeev Kapoor	Founder	Food Food TV and Wonderchef
Sanjiv Kapoor	President	Oberoi Hotels & Resorts
Souvagya Mohapatra	MD, (India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan)	Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts
Sudeep Jain	MD, South West Asia	IHG
Sunjae Sharma	VP & Country Head,	Hyatt India
Vijay Thacker	Director	Horwath India
Vikramjit Singh	President	Lemon Tree Hotel
Zubin Saxena	MD and VP - Operations, South Asia,	Radisson Hotel Group



➤ Hotelier India Awards recognises the industry's indomitable spirit, encouraging those who believe in the hospitality sector, and consider their role to be more than just a job.



➤ As the voice of India's hospitality industry, the Hotelier India Awards plays a significant role in lauding the talent powering business recovery, thus leading to a positive change.

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LAUDING THE PEOPLE WHO PREVAILED

Now in its 12th year, the Hotelier India Awards is a celebration of excellence, leadership and innovation. Last year, most hotel companies were under significant pressure to manage their operations and their manpower in the midst of a post-pandemic slowdown. Mindful of this, the award categories this time around focused on how hospitality professionals rethought and overhauled their strategies from growth to survival mode.

The process for the Awards started in October 2021, when 20 categories and qualifying criteria were finalised. Hotelier India's team set up an online platform where candidates could upload their nominations along with supporting documents, for the perusal of jury members. A new award was introduced this year - the Young Hotelier of the Year - to recognise enterprising professionals who proved that when push came to shove, they did whatever was needed to ensure their companies prevailed.

TO THE VICTOR GO THE SPOILS

This year, over 1,400 hospitality professionals sent in their nominations to win the coveted 12th Hotelier India Awards. This reinforced the opinion of several jury members that appreciation in any form goes a long way in boosting confidence.

That brings us to our distinguished Grand Jury, which comprised industry leaders from hotel operator, owners and consulting companies. 20 of them gathered on 29th November, 2021 at JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar to select the country's brightest hospitality talent across 20 categories.

Bibhor Srivastava, MD of ITP Media India gave a brief introduction about the Hotelier India Awards, stating, "The hospitality industry has shown remarkable resilience in the face of overwhelming challenges. True to its ethos of championing the sector, we present the 12th Hotelier India Awards - a celebration of the industry, by the industry."

Dev Malhotra Group Advisor - Sales & Marketing, Jaquar Group, added how the design-led company was proud to be associated with the Awards as Presenting Partner and how the brand's ethos synthesises perfectly with this much-awaited celebration.

Vinita Bhatia, Editor, Hotelier India, then outlined the methodol-

ogy for selecting the winners. In addition to quantitative data shared in the nomination forms, which includes operating performance and efficiency measures, she asked the jury members to look out for leadership skills, innovative thinking, fostering team spirit and promoting business ethics while choosing candidates.

MAKING UP THEIR MINDS

The jury members then retired to three separate rooms to go through specific award categories in three segments - Luxury, Midscale and Economy. Over the course of the day, they deliberated over each nomination in detail and assigned points for



➡ The jury whittled down the long list of names in each category down to a set of five to six finalists per category.



➡ Vinita Bhatia, Editor, Hotelier India urged jury members to consider leadership skills, innovative thinking and team spirit building while choosing candidates.



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Souvagya Mohapatra, MD, (India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan) of Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts pointed out that the uplifting stories that one hears during the Hotelier India Awards has a very motivating impact on everyone. This also explains why jury members take the trouble to go through each nomination painstakingly – it is their way of giving back to the industry.

The long list of names in each category was whittled down to a set of five to six finalists per category, based on the final scores decided by the jury. The individual receiving the highest points is adjudged the winner of that particular category.

For the 'GM of the Year' category, the finalists will be invited for an in-person interview with the jury members on 16th December at JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity. That is when the final tabulation of score will be done of this category and victors will be decided. Winners for all the awards will be announced at a high voltage ceremony at JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity on the evening of 16th December, in the presence of industry veterans and their peers.

APPRECIATION MATTERS

Offering his congratulations to the Awards, Neeraj Govil, SVP-Operations, APEC of Marriott International pointed out that industry majors like Hotelier India have been front and centre through the pandemic in putting together content that is relevant, optimises relationships and ensures that the consumer and the trade is relying on authentic, unbiased messaging. "I have deep regard for the team that works relentlessly to ensure that. Despite the prevailing challenges, I appreciate the importance given to providing this acknowledgment from senior leaders to individuals who have exhibited remarkable performance through the entire pandemic. The current instalment will invigorate the spirit and bring a renewed sense of energy and achievement within the individuals nominated and the winners," he emphasised.

Anil Chadha, Chief Executive, ITC Hotels added that awards are a great form of validation for one's contribution to the industry. "The 12th Hotelier India Awards is one such form of appreciation that recognises the contribution of efforts, talent and hard work. This edition is one of the special ones as it will celebrate the achievements of the industry members that persisted through a



➡ After months of virtual meetings, industry leaders got the perfect opportunity to meet in-person.



➡ It was not all work for the jury, they also indulged in some friendly banter, and selfie moments!

very challenging year. Through this recognition there will be restored confidence with further inspiration to never give up hope even in extreme difficulties and achieve resiliency in the business operations," he opined.

Anshu Sarin, CEO, South Asia of Keys Hotels pointed out that an industry that thrives on travel and meetings will surely look forward to yet another spectacular show of Hotelier India Awards. Having deep faith in this platform, she believed it presents a great opportunity for everyone to recognise and reward their talent. "This time it will be so much more special, learning and appreciating the true leaders of our industry," she summed up. 📌