Rani Singh

It’s unusual to attend an Asian awards ceremony that ends early enough to get home by 10.30pm but the 3rd Asian Curry Awards that took place in The Great Room at the Grosvenor House on Sunday 17 November 2013 started at 6pm and swept along at a fairly cracking pace despite a few nominees being held up in “traffic” etc.

BBC News’s Iwaoa Burak presented a high volume of awards fairly briskly with little hesitation and the ceremony contained a number of entertainment slots, one of which, from Bangladesh, started the show. British PM David Cameron and Deputy PM Nick Clegg sent impressive video messages recorded ahead of the Commonwealth Heads’ CHOGM summit in Sri Lanka this week and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government the Rt. Hon. Eric Pickles Deputy PM presented the British Government, co-presenting many of the awards.

Shadow Lord Chancellor and Shadow Secretary of State for Justice, the Rt. Hon. Sadiq Khan MP, raised his voice effectively above the almost constant buzz of low conversation in the room to tell the audience that the UK tally of over 10,000 Asian restaurants was larger than the combined numbers of Asian restaurants in Mumbai and Delhi alone. He told us that the UK Asian restaurant industry employed 80,000 people and had a turnover of £4.5 billion.

The scale and geographical spread of the restaurants and caterers nominated for various awards at this event demonstrated that the word “Asian” was being used in the American sense, that is, to encompass Chinese, Malaysian, Thai and Indonesian, as well as Bangladesh, Indian and Pakistan. It made for a varied gathering of mainly men in black tie and dinner suits that included diplomats from Bangladesh, Sweden, Pakistan and Indonesia. Acts included traditional Chinese dancing and a young Chinese singing girl trio.

Rising star Sabir Karim runs two successful restaurants in London, Namaaste Kitchen and Salaam Namaste

European Asian cuisine was represented in the form of an array of dazzling offerings from Sweden; with Pan Buffet winning the Best Asian and Oriental International Restaurant of 2013, and Waijo, the Best Chinese Restaurant award. Both venues can be found in Stockholm.

The Federation of Bangladesh Caterers and the Asian Catering Federation jointly organised the event.

Of all the individual winners, rising star Sabir Karim - unusual for being a chef patron as well as a purser (cabin crew) for British Airways - runs two successful restaurants in London, Namaaste Kitchen and Salaam Namaste, was nominated in three categories, one of which was Best South Asian Restaurant in London. As if being nominated in such distinguished company was not enough, Sabir was awarded the top trophies in two categories; Best Asian and Oriental Innovative Chef of the Year and Best Newcomer of the Year. His restaurant Salaam Namaste was the prizewinner for both sections.

Sabir collected the awards and said that he and his loving wife spend time on stage with him, unlike many other recipients. On one of his tables were his Salaam Namaste chef Jayanta, who originally hail from Delhi, some of his staff and Camden councillors who are also his clients, I found him to be a genuine lover of all things Indian and passionate about his innovative cuisine. He enthusiastically showed me images of mouth-watering dishes like Lahori Tower Lamb held in his mobile that he had prepared for his competition “cook-off”.

charity and the work it does and has done to help integrate traumatised ex-military soldiers into society.

Four special individuals were honoured with the Pride of Punjab Award for bringing honour to their community and country through their lives.

The first award went to Mr Atul Pathak, Managing Director of APPT Corporation Ltd., who has through his Philanthropic Activities helped so many lives. Mr Pathak has raised over £250,000 for various charities and also donates a percentage of his annual sales.

The second award was given to Mr Kuldip Singh Galal, who has been a long serving member of the PSRI and has devoted a considerable amount of his time for the benefit of others through his distinguished and dedicated community services.

The third award was given to Mr Bhupinder Singh, Managing Director of Punjab National Bank (Intl.) Ltd. who has immensely contributed to the banking industry with his out of the box thinking and innovative ideas.

The fourth award went to Ms Seema Malhotra MP, Member of Parliament for Feltham & Heston, Opposition Whip & Chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party Business Group for her selfless service to her constituents and public.

On the night more than £10,000 was raised for the charity, Combat Stress.