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***News Briefing***

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|  | For the attention of **News Desks** | | No. of pages: 3 | |  |
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**Curry house conman sentenced for £117,000 takeaway**

An Indian restaurant owner who lined his pockets by stealing the VAT he charged his customers for takeaway meals, has been sentenced.

Sokrum Ahmed, 47, who owns Red Chilli in Whitechapel, East London, creamed off the £117,000 VAT he charged customers over four years of sales via online delivery services. He also under-declared sales to diners who ate at the restaurant in his accounts.

The fraud was uncovered by a taskforce set up by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to tackle tax dodgers in the restaurant industry. Officers found Ahmed had used a secret bank account in an attempt to hide the money.

Mark Cox, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Ahmed thought he could stash his cash and cheat UK taxpayers. He was wrong and is paying the price for his greed.

“Those who avoid paying their taxes prevent money being provided to fund vital public services and create an uneven playing field for honest competitors. I urge anyone with information on tax fraud to contact our Hotline on 0800 788 887 and report it.”

On sentencing, His Honour Judge W Kennedy said:

“As well as being a fraud on HMRC this was a fraud on your customers.

“You were thoroughly dishonest, and for a sustained period, and I should send you to prison, but I'm determined there should be no further loss to the public purse.”

Ahmed was given a two-year suspended jail sentence, fined £75,000, ordered to pay compensation and undertake unpaid work.

**Notes to Editors**

1. Sokrum Ahmed (DOB 08/08/1970), of Parfett Street, London, E1, admitted the evasion of VAT contrary to the VAT Act of 1994 at Snaresbrook Crown Court on 5 October, 2017.
2. At the same court on 9 November, 2017, he was sentenced to:

* Two years in prison, suspended for two years
* Undertake 150 hours of unpaid work
* Pay compensation of £96,000 within a year or face two years in jail
* Pay a £75,000 fine in a year or face 18 months of jail
* £1,000 legal costs.

1. HMRC taskforces target specific high-risk sectors where there is a risk that some are not paying the tax they owe. Since taskforces began in May 2011, more than 140 taskforces have been launched, bringing in more than £540 million.
2. Taskforces bring together various HMRC compliance and enforcement teams for intensive bursts of activity targeted at specific sectors and locations where there is evidence of high risk of tax evasion and fraud. The teams visit traders to examine their records and carry out other investigations.
3. Follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice.
4. HMRC's Flickr channel: [www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk](http://www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk).

**Issued by HM Revenue & Customs Press Office**

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