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 ***News Release***

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**Shop owner jailed after hiding illegal cigarettes among his fresh veg**

A London shop owner, who evaded £250,000 in tax importing tobacco and cigarettes from India, has been jailed for four-and-a-half years.

Kishor Shah, 63, of Elm Road, Wembley, hid some of his stash under a vegetable stall at the front of his shop, Paan Parlour on Ealing Road.

Together with Hitesh Patel, 41, a company director from Hanworth Road, Hounslow, they imported shipping containers loaded with cigarettes and tobacco from Mumbai.

Shah and Patel were rumbled when a sniffer dog found tobacco in lock-ups in Alperton Lane, Greenford on 19 July 2016. They were arrested by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) officers after driving on to the scene in a white Ford Transit van. The lock-up was searched and contained 44,500 cigarettes and 746kg of chewing tobacco. Shah led officers to his shop where 1,260 smuggled cigarettes were found.

Border Force had also seized two consignments coming through Felixstowe in June 2016, containing 200kg of snuff tobacco, 160kg of raw tobacco and 180kg of chewing tobacco. Patel had paperwork relating to the shipments at his business, Narayan Foods Ltd in Johnson Street, Southall.

A further 1.7 tonnes of chewing tobacco was found at another lock-up on the North Circular Road, Stonebridge Park on 22 July, 2016.

Shah failed to turn up for his trial at Blackfriars Crown Court on 23 July 2018, claiming he had fallen ill on a trip to India, but was tried in his absence.

Simon Kiefer, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Criminals like Shah create an uneven playing field for legitimate businesses and put a burden on the honest majority. He thought his crime would go undetected but he was wrong.

“He evaded tax. Now he’s trying to evade justice and we need the help of the public to track him down so that he can begin his prison sentence.

“HMRC will continue to crack down on tax cheats who think stealing from the public is a legitimate way to do business. If you know of anyone committing tobacco fraud you can report them by calling our Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.”

On 3 August, Shah was convicted and sentenced in his absence to four years in jail for smuggling tobacco. He received a further six months for offending while serving a suspended sentence for a similar offence in 2016. A warrant has been issued for his arrest.

Patel was jailed for two-and-a-half years. Both were disqualified from being a director for five years.

**Notes for Editors**

1. Kishor SHAH, a shop owner of Elm Road, Wembley, DOB 17/07/1955, was sentenced to four years in jail at Blackfriars Crown Court on 3 August, 2018. He was given an extra six months as he was serving a six month suspended sentence for a similar crime.
2. Hitesh PATEL, a company director of Hanworth Road, Hounslow, DOB 13/07/1977 was jailed for two years and six months at Blackfriars Crown Court on 3 August, 2018.
3. They were both convicted by jury of being knowingly concerned in the fraudulent evasion of duty.
4. Anyone with information about people suspected of smuggling, selling or storing illegal tobacco should report it online at: <https://www.gov.uk/report-tobacco-or-alcohol-tax-evasion> or contact our hotline on 0800 788 887.
5. Follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice

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

**Press enquiries only please contact:**

Roger Kasper

Tel: 03000 525110 / 07388 955843

Email: roger.kasper@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

Or

Jemma Smith

Tel: 03000 520184 / 07469 021524

Email: jemma.smith@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

Out of hours

Tel: 07860 359544

**Website** [www.gov.uk/hmrc](http://www.gov.uk/hmrc)