



Harmit Singh

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Shisha shipping company director sentenced for tax evasion

A London man, who evaded nearly £300,000 in tax by importing a shipping container loaded with shisha tobacco, has been sentenced.

Company director Harmit Singh, 43, of Hayes, attempted to smuggle 2,805 kg of Al Fakher branded shisha from India through the Port of Felixstowe and have it delivered to an address in Southall.

The tobacco was seized by officers working for Border Force. HM Revenue

and Customs (HMRC) estimate Singh tried to evade £291,467.55 in duty due to the UK public purse.

Investigators searched his house and found paperwork which showed his company, SS Importers (UK) Limited, had been selling and distributing shisha tobacco in the UK.

Brett Wilkinson, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

“Criminals like Singh 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.

“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.”

Singh admitted excise fraud and at Ipswich Crown Court on 16 February 2018 was sentenced to two years in jail. The sentence was suspended for two years. He will have to do 240 hours of unpaid work, be tagged, follow a curfew order and pay £2,500 in costs.

His Honour Judge David Goodin told Singh: “You are a man who takes his responsibilities seriously and who only wants the best for his household. How ironic then that you have done your best to get sent straight to prison where you can be of no use to them at all.

“You have got yourself in this position through greed. As an experienced trader, by dodging the duty, with obvious enriching consequences to yourself, £300,000 has been lost to the exchequer, to this country. When you have a moment, pop into your local school or hospital and ask them what they could do with £300,000? Not that this concerned you.

“There is no sensible doubt at all that a man of your business acumen and intelligence knew that he wasn't dealing with 'a few smokes'. You knew that this was a significant amount (of tobacco).

“You slipped trying to make a fast buck and got caught. I have no doubt you

are thoroughly ashamed.”

Notes for Editors

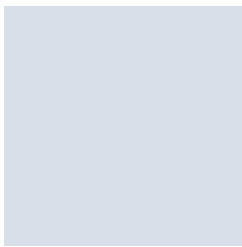
- Harmit Singh, of Hayes End Drive, Hayes, DOB 05/12/1974, was sentenced to two years in jail – suspended for two years - at Ipswich Crown Court on 16 February 2018.
- He was also ordered to pay £2,500 costs (at a rate of £200 per calendar month) and a victim surcharge of £100, to complete 240 hours unpaid work, and will be required to wear an ankle monitor and be subject to a curfew between the hours of 8.30pm and 6.30am. An order was also given for the forfeiture of the tobacco.
- He had pleaded guilty at Ipswich Crown Court on 15 January 2018 to being knowingly concerned in carrying, removing, harbouring, depositing, keeping or concealing goods, which are chargeable with a duty, which has not been paid; contrary to S170 (1) (b) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.
- Shisha tobacco is a flavoured tobacco smoked in a hookah or shisha pipe.
- Photographs are available from HMRC’s Flickr channel www.flickr.com/hmrcgovuk
- 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.
- Follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter @HMRCpressoffice

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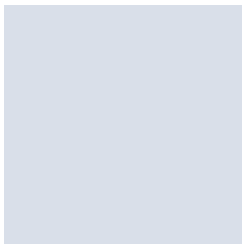
HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is the UK’s tax authority.

HMRC is responsible for making sure that the money is available to fund the UK’s public services and for helping families and individuals with targeted financial support.

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