



Mr Mohammed Siraj Ali

Place of Residence: **Essex**

Sector: **Catering**

Siraj Ali is a pioneering force behind the introduction of Indian Cuisine in the Essex region, which was regarded as very difficult to break into due to the lack of other nationalities in the area. Mr Ali also introduced the corporate social responsibility element to Indian restaurants in the county, and as a result has raised close to a million pounds over more than a decade for numerous charitable causes including the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research. Starting his career in the catering industry in 1970, as a waiter at the Curry Centre in North London, Siraj Ali harnessed his skills and knowledge of the industry during his nine year stint before opening his own establishment. The restaurant was named the New Curry Centre and focused on both authentic cuisine and a friendly service. The restaurant's food, atmosphere and charismatic owner soon caught the imagination of the local residents and slowly established itself as one of the counties most renowned restaurants. Concurrently, Mr Ali opened four other Indian restaurants in the region before opening the Maharaja Restaurant, which can be described as the shiniest jewel in his crown. Mr Ali transformed the failing business

into one of the most successful in the country with innovative cuisine, a unique atmosphere and dynamic service, receiving recognition by Industry experts including Pat Chapman, Chair of the Curry Club. The restaurant is recognised as the first to develop the element of corporate social responsibility in Essex, as it involves itself in numerous community initiatives and charities.

Siraj Ali's Maharaja was even chosen to cater for the launch of the first nationwide Bangladesh Festival of Food and Culture at the House of Commons. In 2007, the Maharaja was chosen by MPs to represent the South East in the Tiffin Cup Curry Awards, winning second runner up position.

In Bangladesh, Mr Ali is one of the Directors of the Metro Centre, a commercial and residential hotel complex comprising of 300 shop units, as well as the Chairman and owner of Al Siraj Plaza, a twelve storey multipurpose building in Goalabazaar, Sylhet, which provides a service to the needy who cannot afford medical aid.

Through his chain of successful restaurants, Mr Ali, over the last twenty years, has donated close to a million pounds to over a hundred different charities including the British Red Cross, Cancer

Research and the NSPCC.

Mr Ali is also very active within the Bangladeshi Community in the Essex region. Siraj is the founder Chairman of both the Thurrock Bangladesh Welfare Association and Thurrock Islamic Educational Cultural Centre. He has also been the General Secretary of the Essex Jamme Masjid in Southend-on-Sea for over four terms.

In Benfleet, Mr Ali is also the General Secretary of the Castlepoint Bangladeshi Education and Cultural Centre as well as Governor of the Haji Soyed Primary School.

Mr Ali is also the Chairman of the Bangladesh government party for the region of Essex and the Vice Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Essex Bangladesh Welfare Association.

Mr Muhammed Siraj Ali is married to Begum Momtaj Khanom and have been blessed with one son and three daughters, who have all graduated from University, apart from his younger daughter Jasmine, who is currently still in education.

Mr Ali enjoys travelling the world, ancient history, world cuisine, running, socialising and spending time with his family