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## Middlesex County

E-mail article

### Edison man plans to sue over arrest

Home News Tribune Online 08/16/06

By **GINA VERGEL**  
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EDISON — An attorney for the Asian-Indian man arrested by immigration officials at a rally earlier this month informed township officials yesterday of his plans to file a lawsuit.

Ravinder S. Bhalla, a Hoboken-based attorney retained by the family of Edison resident Rajnikant Parikh said his client will seek \$5 million in damages.

"What we're alleging is that there was a preplanned conspiracy (between Edison Police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents) . . . for the purpose of interfering with Mr. (Rajnikant) Parikh's constitutional rights," he said.

Bhalla said Parikh and his wife, Julie Patel, have not decided whether to name Mayor Jun Choi or Police Chief George Mieczkowski as defendants in the lawsuit.

"Mrs. (Julie) Patel is upset that the mayor has not extended her the courtesy of discussing the situation," Bhalla said. "If the administration doesn't want to deal with the family directly, we'll seek answers and truth by way of this lawsuit."

Choi was unavailable for comment yesterday. Township spokesman Jerry Barca declined to discuss the possible suit but said the matter had been referred to Township Attorney Jeff Lehrer.

Parikh was picked up by ICE agents while at a rally at the Municipal Complex on Aug. 2. The 30-year-old has been held at the Middlesex County Adult Correctional Facility ever since.

Bhalla said Parikh is contesting the immigration charges through attorney Jonathan Saint-Preux of Irvington.

The timing of Parikh's arrest was "suspicious," Bhalla added.

"The police had his home address for approximately one month," Bhalla said, "but rather than arrest him at home in private, they chose to arrest him while he was exercising constitutionally protected First Amendment rights — free speech, assembling peacefully, etc. It's not a mere coincidence he was exercising those rights against the very same law enforcement agency that collaborated with federal officials to apprehend him."

Edison Police arrested Parikh on July 4 on charges he assaulted a patrolman who responded to an illegal fireworks celebration at an apartment complex off Oak Tree Road. Parikh alleged police brutality but an investigation later cleared the officer of any wrongdoing.

On Aug. 2, while Parikh was at a rally organized by Asian-Indian community leaders decrying his treatment by police, federal agents showed up with a warrant and took him into custody.

Later that day, Choi and Mieczkowski denied having any prior knowledge of ICE's action. But ICE officials, however, said they worked in collaboration with Edison police.

E-mail article

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