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Judge dismisses Parikh case

Home News Tribune Online 04/19/07

By **RITU JHA**
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EDISON — South Amboy Municipal Court Judge Joseph C. Hoffman Wednesday put an end to the eight-month-long criminal proceedings against Edison resident Rajnikant Parikh who was deported to India, his native country, last Thursday.

"The case is dismissed," Hoffman told a reporter.

Parikh was facing disorderly persons charges stemming from a July 4 illegal fireworks display in Edison.

He was held at the Middlesex County Adult Correction Center in North Brunswick after being arrested on Aug. 2 by the Immigration and Custom Enforcement officers. The arrest occurred during a rally at the Municipal Building to protest alleged police brutality by patrolman Michael Dotro during Parikh's July 4 arrest.

Dotro charged Parikh with aggravated assault on a police officer, resisting arrest, rioting and failure to disperse during the July 4 incident.

The charges were later downgraded to disorderly person offenses by the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office.

Edison Township Prosecutor Thomas Downs said Wednesday that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau informed him on April 12 that Parikh was to be deported that evening.

Downs said the township made no request to hold Parikh in this country while the criminal case was pending. "I have no jurisdiction in the Federal Government," Downs said.

The case could not proceed without Parikh so Downs requested dismissal of the charges.

Ravinder Bhalla, Parikh's criminal attorney, said, if Edison had requested that ICE postpone Parikh's deportation because of the criminal charges, "ICE would have obliged."

ICE spokesman Adam Puharic said ICE had been in constant touch with Edison Township since Parikh was taken into ICE custody.

"ICE was in communication with Edison Township to notify them of our intention to remove Parikh," Puharic said.

Bhalla contended, however, that "Edison avoided considerable embarrassment that would have resulted if the internal investigation files were released and we had a public trial in this matter."

He said Parikh's deportation was a convenient way to eliminate the trial.

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