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Edison must submit arrest files in Parikh disorderly-persons trial

Home News Tribune Online 02/14/07

By **RITU JHA**
STAFF WRITER
rjha@thnt.com

SOUTH AMBOY — Edison has to submit the complete file of its investigations of the July 4 and Aug. 2 incidents that led to the arrest of Rajnikant Parikh to his attorney under terms of a ruling Tuesday by South Amboy Municipal Court Judge Joseph C. Hoffman.

Hoffman ordered that the files be turned over during a hearing on the disorderly persons charges against Parikh, charges that stem from the July 4 illegal fireworks display at Dayton Drive apartments.

Hoffman ruled that Edison must give the available files to Ravinder Bhalla, attorney of Parikh, but he denied Bhalla's motion to gain access to the personnel file of the patrolman Michael Dotro, the police officer involved in the arrest and subsequent charges of assault and police brutality.

Hoffman also denied Bhalla access to the internal-investigation records of a 2005 charge against Dotro involving allegations of police brutality by two Indian business owners, Vimal Joshi and Atul Patel, in which Dotro was cleared last year.

Bhalla said he may request the records again later in the trial.

Parikh is being held at the Middlesex County Adult Correction Center in North Brunswick, pending a deportation order that he is appealing. He was present during his hearing on the Edison charges Tuesday.

Dotro arrested Parikh, 30, during an unscheduled July 4 celebration on charges of aggravated assault on a police officer, resisting arrest, rioting and failure to disperse. The charges were later downgraded to disorderly charges by the Middlesex County prosecutor's office. The case is being heard in South Amboy.

Parikh filed a complaint against Dotro and other township police officers, saying he was beaten with out provocation.

Dotro reported slight swelling in his face and minor cuts on his arms after he subdued and handcuffed Parikh, who elbowed and punched the officer in the face, Dotro said. Dotro has given Bhalla a video showing his injuries.

"I am happy the judge granted access to the internal-investigation file," said Bhalla.

Hoffman made the ruling after a 30-minute private conference outside the courtroom.

Bhalla asked Hoffman to dismiss the entire case based on published reports that Dotro's brother, Sam Dotro, is an attorney for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and was involved in having Parikh arrested by ICE on Aug. 2 on an immigration charge. Hoffman denied that motion saying, "It's premature and discovery is incomplete."

Hoffman gave the township 20 days time to produce the documents and said he would set a hearing date sometime after that.

"I will need sometime to go through the records," Bhalla said. "It's a political prosecution. My client is innocent."

Parikh remained silent throughout the proceedings, but as he left the courtroom, he said in Hindi, "Jai Sri Krishna," (God is Great), looking toward community activist



JODY SOMERS/Staff

Rajnikant Parikh of Edison, left, and attorney Ravindra Bhalla, talk before a motion hearing in Municipal Court South Amboy, NJ, before Judge Joseph C. Hoffman yesterday.

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South Amboy municipal judge Joseph C. Hoffman yesterday.

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Pradeep "Peter" Kothari, who attended the hearing Tuesday and has been a supporter of Parikh.

"Dotro in his three years of service has three allegations against him," said Dave Makkar, another Parikh supporter who attended Tuesday's hearing.

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Rajnikanth Parikh in court.

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