

METRO NEWS BRIEFS: NEW JERSEY; **4 Accused of Smuggling Immigrants From India**

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Body

An **immigrant smuggling** ring enrolled its clients in intensive music and dance lessons so they could get visas as members of folk groups from **India** and then stay in the United States after the groups left, Federal officials said yesterday.

In at least four cases from 1994 to 1997, Indians paid up to \$20,000 each to be **smuggled** into the United States as members of legitimate groups that performed at schools and cultural festivals, said Holly Kulka, an assistant United States attorney.

The **smuggled immigrants** did not actually perform, but the lessons helped them pass random interviews by United States Embassy officials in Bombay who issued them visas, Ms. Kulka said.

Officials said members of the ring also ran an unlicensed business that bought gold in the United States and sold it at a profit in **India**, skirting that country's limits on gold imports.

Federal indictments were unsealed yesterday against Ajay and Ramanik Patel, a father and son in Colonia; Kanubhai Patel of Belleville and Hasmukh Patel, who is believed to be in **India**, where he coordinated operations, Ms. Kulka said.

All but Hasmukh Patel were arrested yesterday, Ms. Kulka said. She said Kanubhai Patel, the only one not indicted on charges related to the gold business, was freed after posting \$100,000 bail yesterday in Federal District Court in Newark.

Kanubhai Patel's lawyer, Lawrence Lustberg, said his client was "completely innocent."

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