

WestCoastNewsline

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Hotmail man's namesake convicted for fraud

SAM RAO
Oakland, Calif

WHAT'S in a name? At least \$1,728,000, if you ask Lal Bhatia. This was the amount that Walnut Creek-based Lal (38) duped dozens of people of, claiming among other things that he was related to Sabeer Bhatia—the founder of Hotmail.com.

Last week, Lal was convicted on nine counts of mail

fraud and 18 counts of money laundering, after a federal jury trial of over two weeks before US District Court Judge Claudia Wilken.

Acting as the CEO of IT firm ABE Technologies Inc. (ABE), smooth-talking Bhatia induced people to invest large amounts of money in his company after falsely claiming that IT big guns like Bill Gates, Michael Dell and Sabeer Bhatia were investing in or purchasing ABE offer-

ings. Evidence suggested that Lal had also falsely told potential investors that a fictitious multi-billion dollar Swiss banking entity was backing him and he apparently even provided the investors with forged documents to further his scheme.

Testifying at trial, Sabeer Bhatia said that he had never met nor done business with the defendant.

The sentencing of Lal will take place on September 11,

in Oakland. The maximum statutory penalty for each count of mail fraud is 20 years imprisonment, a fine of \$250,000, three years of supervised release, a special assessment of \$100, and restitution of the investors' funds. The maximum statutory penalty for each count of money laundering is ten years imprisonment, a fine of \$250,000, three years of supervised release, and a special assessment of \$100.

High on Hollywood, Bashey waits on life

KALYANI VASAN
Hollywood, Calif

"ALTHOUGH the ride was tough, I feel left out because I never had to wait tables like most struggling Hollywood actors. I did work at an electronics store though in New York," says an animated Ismail Bashey, the face of *Wings of Hope*, *ABCD* and Hindi soaps—*Mausam* and *Dollar Bahu*. Bashey who has also worked in *Roller ball*, *the Sopranos*, *Law & Order*, was recently seen in an episode of the *Alias* with Jennifer Garner.

Commendable for an Indian actor who had almost given up acting after his arrival in the US.

Having moved to New York 15 years ago, armed with a fair experience in Mumbai's English theater, (he had worked with the likes of Alec Padamsee and Shia-mak Davar). But acting was never a career option. Instead he chose to do what Indian Americans usually do—worked for a while and then started his own business—importing leather goods. However, like all those "once bitten by the acting bug, I realized that I was miserable and wanted to let my creative spirit out."

Friend Rahul Khanna—by then a known name in films and TV—suggested him to take over as the host of ITV's film news magazine *Saturday Live*. "It was an entertaining show with a mix of live calls, quizzes, filmi news etc. I did it for two years and then went on to Asia Net, another ethnic television network where I got to interview many Bollywood stars. Soon after, Rahul's agent, Annette Alvarez,

started representing me for work. I started getting contracts to do voice-overs initially that paid for my board and keep. I have not stopped doing them to this day. I just completed one for a PBS presentation on the Himalayas."

In the meanwhile Alvarez also arranged for some acting assignments. And so he started auditioning—for roles stereotypically 'desi', to parts where he was a Persian, an Egyptian, an Italian and so on. While doing this Bashey real-

ized that he needed to go to school to learn 'the method'—"acting" in Hollywood parlance.

He graduated from the Lee Strauss Institute in New York. "Auditioning is

such a humbling and scary process. There are so many actors and so few parts. The competition is grueling. My agent finds for me parts to read on an exclusive website called Breakdown Service and turns in my head shot. If you are lucky, the casting director picks your photo and you get called in with hundreds of others to do 'sides' which in acting parlance means reading two or three pages from the script. Out of a narrowed down list of perhaps 50, 10 get a call back. Then the producer and director get to watch us once again and if you get the part, you give 10 percent of the signed amount to your agent for putting you out there."

Bashey compares himself to "waiters on life". "We get rejected every single day and still need to go on." But with a canvas that includes voice-overs, Hollywood films and television, he makes it clear: "I am not an extra! I do get lines and I am a serious actor."



Smile Survey shocker: Rotting teeth bigger epidemic than obesity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
Sacramento, Calif

CALIFORNIA kids have rotting teeth and have the second worst dental health in the nation—next only to Arkansas, according to a recently released study.

Over 70 percent of 21,000 children between kindergarten and 3rd grade in California were diagnosed as having serious dental problems in the "Smile Survey" released recently by the Dental Health Foundation (DHF). So by the time they reach 3rd grade almost 750,000 will have serious dental health problems.

This survey which spanned California's population cross section and 200 schools, concurs with an earlier report by California Public Health Department. Releasing the report, DHF chairman Dave Perry said, "The survey found that 17 percent of kindergartners and 5 percent of third-graders had never been to a dentist. These results are shocking."

The study also reveals that by third grade, 28 percent of elementary school kids show signs of tooth decay—which means about 750,000 kids in school. And nearly one out of 10 has tooth abscesses. While there is an increased incidence of dental disease—correlated to socio-income status—children across racial and economic lines all clearly showed dental problems. In Alameda County, home to California's third largest Indian-American population, half of all children have tooth decay by the time they reach kindergarten. Anjali P, a dentist in SF Bay area said, "It was amazing, the number of wealthy Indian-American children who show up with easily preventable tooth problems. It is the lack of dental hygiene education which is affecting the kids."

Stanford to feast on Indo-Pak cinema

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
San Jose, Calif

THE South Asian American Films and Arts Association (SAAFA) will hold a festival of films by Indian and Pakistani filmmakers in May to coincide with its third anniversary. Titled "Indo-Pak Screening Series" will feature independent filmmakers from the subcontinent.

In its third year now, SAAFA is dedicated to the promotion of the South Asian American cinema and art.

The SF Bay area quite regularly hosts lot of events for people from the technical realm. But there are few events catering to the artistic Desi. While Indians complain about it regularly, few like Vivek Kumar and Pooja Bharadwaj, to do something about it.

Kumar and Bharadwaj met at a technical meet in Cupertino and "clicked"

immediately. Both shared a passion for good desi cinema. In 2003, they got together to set up the SAAFA. With three chapters in New York City, Los Angeles and the SF Bay area, SAAFA today supports independent films and art projects. It organizes film screenings, festivals, panel discussions, workshops and has a monthly newsletter which reaches near 10,000 subscribers across the country.

"We are not an underground or social entity, we are in the business promoting and presenting quality South Asian films. We don't screen any and every movie just because it is made by a South Asian filmmaker. Our goal is to create an awareness for South Asian artistic disciplines in North America and encourage emerging South Asian talent," said Kumar. Indo-Pak Screening Series will be an extension of this.



Sher Foundation (UC Riverside) won the 4th annual California State University of Northridge Bhangra Competition in Los Angeles last week. See page 2 for report

