

Harendra Singh arrested at home by federal agents on bribery and obstruction indictment

September 9, 2015 by ROBERT E. KESSLER / robert.kessler@newsday.com



Harendra Singh is led out of the FBI office in Melville early Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2015. The Long Island restaurateur was arrested Wednesday morning on charges of bribery of a public official, failing to pay millions of dollars in taxes and obstruction of justice, sources said. (Credit: James Carbone)

Federal agents arrested prominent Long Island restaurateur Harendra Singh in his Syosset home at dawn Wednesday on multiple criminal charges, including bribing a former Town of

Oyster Bay employee with a total of \$50,000 checks made out to cash and a \$36,000 luxury-car lease, according to a federal indictment.

The bribes were to get the official to have the town guarantee \$32 million in loans Singh obtained for his businesses, including food concessions Singh operated at town beaches and a town golf course, according to the indictment filed in the federal court in Central Islip. Singh also paid the expenses for the unnamed employee and a relative to travel to Asia in 2012, the indictment said.

The town employee was otherwise unidentified in the 13-count indictment, which also included charges of defrauding the Internal Revenue Service by failing to report millions of dollars in wages paid off-the-books to employees of Singh's restaurants, obstruction of justice by lying to FBI agents, and fraudulently collecting \$950,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for falsely reporting damages supposedly caused by superstorm Sandy to his Water's Edge restaurant in Queens.

Several sources identified the town employee, who allegedly accepted the bribes, as former Deputy Town Attorney Frederick Mei.

Marta Kane, a spokesman for the Town of Oyster Bay, declined to comment.

Newsday has reported that Mei was involved in negotiating deals in which the town helped back the loans Singh wanted for his business operations.

Mei's criminal defense attorney, Gary Schoer, of Lake Success, declined to comment.

Singh's attorney, Joseph Conway, also declined to comment, as did federal officials.

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In a statement, Kelly Currie, the acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District said, "Harendra Singh ran his business through fraud and deceit, using bribes and kickbacks to tilt the playing field in the Town of Oyster Bay."

Diego Rodriguez, head of the FBI's New York office, said: "The charges . . . describe an outpouring of greed. As alleged, Singh put local business owners at a significant disadvantage, siphoned funds from public money he was not entitled to, and sidestepped his responsibility to pay taxes on underreported income."

FBI agents worked with agents of the IRS Criminal Division on the case.

The obstruction charge involves Singh lying to FBI agents who were searching his office and telling them that he did not have a key to an office safe, the indictment said. When the agents left, Singh supposedly took out a key to the safe, removed \$175,000 in cash and told an employee to hide the money, according to the indictment.

Singh is expected to be arraigned later Wednesday in federal court in Central Islip.

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