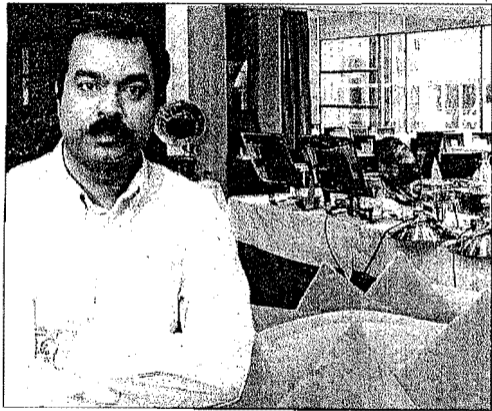


'You can find good chefs [in India], but they can't get a visa'



Jose Madappilly, owner of Salam Bombay restaurant in downtown Vancouver, is having difficulty bringing in qualified chefs.

NICK PROCAYLO — THE PROVINCE

BY JOHN COLEBOURN
STAFF REPORTER

Restaurant owner Jose Madappilly knows you can't cook curry in a hurry.

That's why he goes to India each year to find some top-notch chefs who can handle the heat in his bustling downtown Vancouver curry kitchen.

After hand-selecting eight chefs last year, Madappilly said he was given approval from Canadian immigration officials to only hire two chefs — leaving his kitchen in chaos and his business on unsteady ground.

"We are not able to find good cooks here, so we tried to hire them from India last year," said Madappilly.

"Of the eight, we were given permits to hire two cooks for a two-year period. They said they didn't think the others would go

back to India after the two-year period.

"I'm facing a dilemma for the Olympics. I'll be understaffed and how can I operate under those conditions?"

Madappilly said there are young applicants who would be ideal for his Salam Bombay Indian Restaurant on Burrard Street, but because they don't have families or money in India, they are perceived by immigration officials as a high risk not to return to their homeland.

He is not alone in his curry conundrum.

Kamaljid Mroke is the owner of India Bistro on Davie Street in Vancouver's West End, and his problems in the kitchen mirror Madappilly's.

"I cannot expand or do anything because of staff problems," he said. "You can find good chefs, but they can't get a visa."

Many chefs, Mroke points out, are not for-

mally trained in India and do not have diplomas to show immigration officials.

He feels it would be simple for immigration to determine if an applicant is a legitimate chef.

"If they doubt this person, they should have them cook the meal from scratch," he said.

Mroke wants to see Ottawa ease restrictions on bringing chefs into Canada and expedite their application process.

Johanne Nadeau, a spokeswoman for Citizenship and Immigration Canada, said the problems in India stem from bogus paperwork.

"There is a high rate of fraud in India," Nadeau said.

"The government of Canada makes every effort to detect application fraud."

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