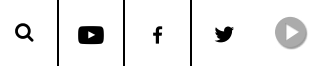


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ROBBINSVILLE – Construction at the site of one of the world's largest Hindu temples on a sprawling property in Mercer County has been halted, amid an **FBI raid and accusations** of forced labor and slave-like wages involving Indian nationals.

"Violations at the BAPS temple are horrific, unfathomable," Gov. Phil Murphy said at Wednesday's state briefing, when asked about the class-action lawsuit filed in federal court Tuesday.

He continued it would be just "awful" if all of the violations and accused actions turned out to be validated.

The **lawsuit was filed in federal court** on behalf of nearly 200 men from India who say they were brought to the U.S. between 2018 and 2020, and paid \$1.20 an hour for menial construction work.

The **temple itself** is entirely made of hand-carved Carrara marble, first imported from Italy to India, as **reported** by Curbed. There, all 13,499 carved pieces were completed before being shipped to New Jersey and assembled in Robbinsville.

While the temple itself was opened in 2014, the complex has remained under construction.

The men said they were told they would be doing the stone carvings but once they arrived, found that most of that work had been done.

According to the complaint, workers were brought to the United States between 2018 and 2020 under false pretenses on religious visas, which are intended for ministry work.

Instead, the complaint said, they were severely exploited and forced to do manual labor while living in trailers inside a fenced, guarded compound.



A 2017 visit to the Robbinsville mandir (Phil Murphy via Twitter)

Murphy **visited** the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir on the Robbinsville campus in September 2017.

Two years later, Murphy became the state's first governor to make an official trip to India. Along with the First Lady, Tammy Murphy, the 40-member delegation **visited** Swaminarayan Akshardham in Delhi.

Murphy said that he did not believe he had any campaign events stemming from his visit.

On Wednesday, the FBI field office in Newark put a call out for any public **information or tips** regarding the case out of Robbinsville.

Federal agents also shared information about a **survivor's fund** which provides for immediate and long-term needs of labor trafficking survivors, as run by Covenant House New Jersey and Catholic Charities.

Every dollar donated goes "directly to meeting the needs of labor trafficking survivors, including housing, food, clothing and hygiene products, health services, and more," according to the fund's website.

Meanwhile, after visits to worksites at the BAPS Temple in Robbinsville and a separate BAPS Temple in Edison, state labor officials **ordered a construction company** to stop work less than two weeks ago.

Newark-based Cunha's Construction Inc. was accused of paying workers cash off the books, while also failing to pay overtime, failure to keep records and other wages that were unpaid.

The contractor was **ordered** to halt all work until back wages and fines have been settled.

With previous reporting by Dan Alexander

TAKE A DIP IN THE MOST BREATHTAKING BACKYARD POOLS IN NEW JERSEY