

VENTURA COUNTY STAR

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Highs 85 at coast,
92 inland **C10**

 **Saturday**

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Brothers awarded \$475,000 in employment dispute

From staff reports

A Ventura County Superior Court jury awarded two brothers nearly \$500,000 late Friday after finding their former employers duped them into working at a west-side market.

Mohan and Balbir Singh, who moved west from New York City in 1999, claimed they were asked to manage the Ventura Central Market but never paid the kind of money promised to them.

The brothers filed suit against Satnam Bains, Harneek Behniwal and Surinder Sunner in April 2002, alleging fraud, deceit and intentional emotional distress.

Attorneys from both sides did not return a call seeking comment late Friday.

The suit was filed one year after the brothers were wounded in a shooting that killed a co-worker, 35-year-old Alejandro Alvarez.

The shooting occurred inside the market at 505 N. Ventura Ave. when two armed men opened fire because their demands for cash were not met quickly enough.

Alvarez was killed, and the Singh brothers were wounded.

Later, police killed a man believed to be one of the shooters during a standoff. A second man, Richard Geise Jr. of Ojai,

was eventually convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison without parole for the shooting.

In addition to the fraud suit filed by the Singh brothers, Mohan Singh filed a workers' compensation claim because he was shot.

According to the suit, after the brothers were shot, their employers informed them they never purchased insurance that would have compensated them for their injuries.

The brothers said they have been unable to pay their hospital bills.

After handing down a verdict against the employers, a

jury, on a 10-2 vote, ordered them to pay the brothers a combined \$475,000.