

NJ man 'stranded' in India after traveling to help sick father: wife

By [Joshua Rhett Miller](#) May 5, 2021 | 4:33pm | [Updated](#)



Ashu Mahajan, left, with his father. Mahajan went to India to care for his ailing dad but is now stuck in the country.

A New Jersey man who traveled to his native India to care for his coronavirus-stricken father is now stuck abroad while awaiting approval to come back to the US — as the country battles a catastrophic surge in infections, his worried wife told The Post Wednesday.

Neha Mahajan, 39, said her husband, Ashu, 43, left the family's Union County home on April 17 to fly to New Delhi to care for his 75-year-old father, Ravi, who contracted COVID-19.

Ashu's father was already on a ventilator and unconscious by the time his son arrived — and died shortly after on April 21, Neha said.

But now, Ashu is trapped in India's capital because of a visa issue — and the US embassy has since canceled all routine visa appointments in light of the surging cases.

Ashu Mahajan, who works as the director of product development for a New York City-based software company, has been living in the US since 2008 on an H-1B work visa, which allows employers to assign foreign workers in specialty occupations.



Ashu Mahajan and his wife Neha. The couple has been living in the US since 2008.

Mahajan has an approved visa petition following the expiration of his H-1B work visa during the global pandemic, but [Diya Mathews](#), a New Jersey immigration attorney working to help get Ashu home, told The Post that his approved visa petition isn't enough to get him back in the country. He needs a valid visa too.

“So the problem that Ashu has now is that now that he's outside the United States, he needs a visa to get back into the country,” Mathews said.

And that cannot happen until the US Consulate in India reopens because it requires an in-person visit, the attorney said.

“I'm scared for him,” his wife told The Post. “I'm scared by the fact that he's all alone. God forbid something happens, I don't know what we'll do.”

Ashu is now left to desperately check the US Embassy New Delhi's website for new appointments — but the next one isn't available until next year as the shutdown causes a massive backlog, Neha said.

“What they’re asking us to do is something that we’re already doing,” she said. “I’m up until 3 o’clock in the morning to find that spot. But like I said, there are very few spots at all that are available and right now. The calendar shows nothing is available until 2022.”

Meanwhile, India continues to break grim pandemic records in its battle against the deadly virus. On Wednesday, the country’s Health Ministry reported 382,315 new cases and 3,780 deaths, bringing its total death toll to 226,188, the Associated Press reported. Experts believe the true figure is far higher, though.



Ashu Mahajan is desperate for an appointment at the US Embassy in New Delhi but he can't get one until next year because of the COVID-19 shutdown.

A State Department spokesman acknowledged in a statement to The Post Wednesday that all routine visa appointments at the US Embassy New Delhi and the consulates in Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai are cancelled until further notice.

“Applicants should monitor U.S. Embassy New Delhi’s website for the latest information on its operating status,” the statement read.

On Twitter, the embassy only said “emergency services for U.S. citizens will continue.”

“So, what can I do?” Neha asked. “I don’t know what route to go. I’m at a dead end.”

Ashu has thankfully managed to avoid contracting the virus so far, but it’s unclear for how long he can stay healthy as India struggles to contain the spread.

He could not be immediately reached for comment Wednesday, but he told WABC Tuesday that he expected a headache upon trying to return to the US.

“Frankly speaking, I knew I that would have a tough time, but I didn’t have any options,” he told the station. “But I never anticipated it would completely close.”

A State Department official told The Post in a separate statement Wednesday that visa records are confidential under US law, so details of individual cases cannot be shared.