

New vetting rules slow H-1B visa processing, leaving workers in limbo

US visa delays have left hundreds of H-1B workers stuck abroad, raising concerns for employers and families

By **CK SMITH**
Weekend Editor

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Technology workers holding H-1B visas are now stuck in limbo trying to renew their visas back in their home country. (filo / Getty Images)

Hundreds of Indian professionals who traveled home this month to renew their U.S. work visas have found themselves **unexpectedly stranded**, after U.S. consulates abruptly canceled and rescheduled H-1B interview appointments amid expanded vetting procedures.

The **cancellations**, which began in mid-December as new social media and online presence reviews took effect, have left workers with appointments pushed months — in some cases into 2027 — disrupting jobs, families and plans to return to the United States.

“H-1B India January visa appointments are being pushed to September,” said immigration attorney **Rajiv Khanna**. “There isn’t much that can be done because this administration has created a systemic problem that appears deliberate. What was the extreme emergency that the social media vetting policy had to be changed and people’s lives upended overnight? This has become a universal problem for H-1B employees applying in India.”

The State Department has linked many of the delays to a **new policy** requiring expanded social media vetting of applicants, a shift that has **reduced** the number of interviews conducted each day and forced consulates to defer scheduled slots.

“Note also, the Trump administration had earlier announced a policy that you can only apply for a visa from your country of nationality or residence,” Khanna said. “This edict, combined with the current delay fiasco, has built a ‘wall’ for employers and employees who are already in the process of stamping.”

Affected H-1B workers face a range of **challenges**: separation from families in the U.S., potential lost wages, and uncertainty over job security. Immigration experts have urged workers to communicate with employers about remote work options or extended leave to avoid losing positions tied to their visas.

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The delays also come amid broader immigration **policy changes** under the Trump administration, including heightened vetting requirements and a steep fee for new H-1B applications. Critics argue the cumulative effect of these measures is creating undue hardship for skilled workers and the companies that rely on them.

Tech industry leaders are taking notice. **Google** and Apple have reportedly warned some



With tens of thousands of U.S. jobs in sectors such as technology and engineering dependent on H-1B talent, employers and workers alike are watching the situation closely as visa processing delays continue into next year.

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CK Smith is Salon's weekend editor.

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