

Why has India issued a ban on 59 Chinese Apps including TikTok and CamScanner?

What's going on?

On the 30th of June, the Indian government enforced a ban on 59 Chinese apps including TikTok, CamScanner, WeChat, and Meitu, because of security and privacy concerns.

These apps are no longer available for download on the Indian App Store or Google Play Store. Users that still have these apps on their phones have reported that they're no longer functioning on any data or Wi-Fi networks.

Why were these Chinese applications banned?

This digital strike was implemented shortly after the Galwan Valley clash wherein over 20 Indian soldiers were unjustly slaughtered by armed Chinese troops; this act caused tensions to rise between India and China. The Indian Ministry of Information contends that these apps were illegally "stealing and surreptitiously transmitting users' data" to servers that are out of the country. This makes it a threat to national security. With this argument, banning these apps was a way to protect Indian citizens from having their data leaked without their permission.

Has this adversely impacted China?

The ban is mainly a political power move on the part of the Indian government. The opprobrium China has earned following the activity in the Galwan Valley could lead to Chinese technology firms being purposefully excluded from key global markets. Unfortunately for China, these repercussions aren't limited to applications; the USA has been rallying to restrict the usage of Huawei for 5G networks as they have been skeptical about China's access to consumer data.

Meanwhile, apps such as TikTok owned by Chinese tech giant ByteDance, may risk losing \$6 billion in revenues and the more than \$1 billion that the company has invested in India. India has some of the largest consumer bases for these apps including 200 million Indian TikTok users. The UC browser (a Chinese web browser developed by a subsidiary of the Alibaba Group) is also the second most popular mobile browser in the country. This makes India a critical market for China. Chinese hardware companies, smartphone companies, and venture capitalist firms are in turn going to be hit by this ban. All in all, the Galwan intrusion has (literally) cost China more than its soldiers thanks to India's swift redressal.

How will this ban affect Indian consumers?

Numerous Indian citizens have been quick to share their concerns about the ban on these commonly used Chinese apps. 1 out of 4 apps in India are Chinese and Indians make up the largest consumer base of these apps. The popular short video

app TikTok was beloved in India and helped numerous online celebrities grow their fan bases, so much so that some of them were even reliant upon this app as a source of their livelihood. Through this app, famous 'TikTokers' were able to secure paid sponsorships and brand deals. Meanwhile, Indian companies used it as a place to creatively advertise their products. An example of this was Dettol's #handwashchallenge that has spread awareness about hygiene during the COVID-19 crisis. This placed Dettol hand soap in the spotlight, and the involvement of celebrities like Kartik Aaryan and Disha Patani elevated the strength of the marketing campaign.

Apps such as WeChat were particularly used by Indians to keep in touch with friends and coworkers internationally, where apps such as Whatsapp are blocked. This ban will simply make communication harder for them now. For this reason, the Indian government has been under scrutiny from its citizens for blocking such applications without having any good alternatives. Indians are hopeful that this will be used as an opportunity to develop homegrown apps and goods that make up for the banned foreign ones.

Do other countries also plan on enforcing this ban?

Countries around the globe may use India's ban as a precedent, in fact, the USA is currently mulling over it. The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the United States is 'certainly looking at' banning Chinese social media apps, including TikTok. He even blatantly stated that individuals should only download this app 'if you want your private information in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.' Furthermore, the Australian Government is also facing calls to restrict the use of Chinese apps like TikTok among others. An unnamed Australian member of parliament also fears that TikTok is gathering user's private information and saving it on Chinese servers.

What are some alternative apps that can be used in India?

If you find yourself bored without TikTok or in a desperate need to scan documents without CamScanner, here is a list of great alternatives to these Chinese apps!

The following apps are available on the Android and IOS:

Triller or Youtube: Alternative to TikTok

Google Chrome: Alternative to UC Browser

Adobe Scanner: Alternative to CamScanner

B612 or Candy Camera: Alternative to Meitu and BeautyPlus

Whatsapp or Telegram: Alternative to WeChat

Files by Google: Alternative to Xender and ShareIt



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