

## **Ban on Chinese Apps - Rationale and Impact**

### **Why in news?**

India has banned 59 apps originating from China, including very popular ones like the TikTok, UC Browser, ShareIt, and CamScanner.

### **What is the legal basis for India's action?**

- The ban has been enforced under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- It offers the power to issue directions for blocking for public access of any information through any computer resource.
- This is done in the interest of -
  - i. sovereignty and integrity of India
  - ii. defence of India, security of the State
  - iii. friendly relations with foreign States
  - iv. public order (or)
  - v. for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to above
- The Ministry of Information and Technology said that it has received many complaints in this regard.
- There were reports on misuse of some mobile apps.
- There was stealing and secretly transmitting users' data in an unauthorised manner to servers that have locations outside India.
- The notification is expected to be followed by instructions to Internet service providers to block these apps.
- Users will soon see a message saying access to the apps has been restricted on the request of the government.
- [The list of the banned apps is provided below]

- |                     |                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. TikTok           | 31. Mi Video Call – Xiaomi        |
| 2. Shareit          | 32. WeSync                        |
| 3. Kwai             | 33. ES File Explorer              |
| 4. UC Browser       | 34. Viva Video – QU Video Inc     |
| 5. Baidu map        | 35. Meitu                         |
| 6. Shein            | 36. Vigo Video                    |
| 7. Clash of Kings   | 37. New Video Status              |
| 8. DU battery saver | 38. DU Recorder                   |
| 9. Helo             | 39. Vault- Hide                   |
| 10. Likee           | 40. Cache Cleaner DU App studio   |
| 11. YouCam makeup   | 41. DU Cleaner                    |
| 12. Mi Community    | 42. DU Browser                    |
| 13. CM Browsers     | 43. Hago Play With New Friends    |
| 14. Virus Cleaner   | 44. Cam Scanner                   |
| 15. APUS Browser    | 45. Clean Master – Cheetah Mobile |
| 16. ROMWE           | 46. Wonder Camera                 |
| 17. Club Factory    | 47. Photo Wonder                  |
| 18. Newsdog         | 48. QQ Player                     |
| 19. Beutry Plus     | 49. We Meet                       |
| 20. WeChat          | 50. Sweet Selfie                  |
| 21. UC News         | 51. Baidu Translate               |
| 22. QQ Mail         | 52. Vmate                         |
| 23. Weibo           | 53. QQ International              |
| 24. Xender          | 54. QQ Security Center            |
| 25. QQ Music        | 55. QQ Launcher                   |
| 26. QQ Newsfeed     | 56. U Video                       |
| 27. Bigo Live       | 57. V fly Status Video            |
| 28. SelfieCity      | 58. Mobile Legends                |
| 29. Mail Master     | 59. DU Privacy                    |
| 30. Parallel Space  |                                   |

## What is the impact of the ban?

- Some apps on the banned list are very popular in India.
- The TikTok app, especially, has over 100 million active users in the country.
- About 30% of TikTok's downloads is said to be coming from India.
- Google-owned YouTube has more users in India than TikTok.
- But TikTok was seen as having more potential in terms of personalisation of content and overall influence.
- TikTok made relentless push into India's hinterland. Evidently, the app supports over 15 Indian languages.
- This enabled the app to work on regional talent in a very personalised manner.
- New social media platforms like Helo and Likee, as well as video chat app Bigo Live, are immensely popular among Indians who are not comfortable in English.
- These users will have to look for substitutes.
- Also, most of these platforms have Indian creators, for many of whom this is the only source of income.
- Many of these apps have offices and employees in India, and a few thousand jobs could be at stake now.

## Has TikTok been banned earlier?

- TikTok has been blocked in India once earlier.
- In, May 2019, in the run up to the general elections, the government banned the app's downloads for 2 weeks following a Madras High Court ruling.
- The Court observed that it could expose children on the app to graphic content or predators.
- TikTok had appealed and the court subsequently reversed its ruling.
- But this time, though, the ban could be there to stay.

## How strategic is the move and how does it impact China?

- The move comes as an exercise of coercive diplomacy with China amid the tense standoff in Ladakh.
- The decision has been taken in a specific strategic and national security context.
- So, it could be a warning to bigger Chinese businesses in India, and to China itself.
- However, the government has, for now, picked up a low-denomination item - mobile apps.
- This has only a limited impact on Indian businesses.
- But it has a disproportionately large presence in the mass consumer segment.
- This may not hurt India given the alternatives in the app space.
- But for China, the Indian app market is growing and valuable.
- More so because internet costs here are one of the lowest in the world, and consumers number over 800 million.
- Nearly half of these smartphone users are below 25 and hungry for content on their devices.
- A decision at stopping physical goods could have been challenged by China at the WTO.
- Instead, this move focuses on the technology sector.
- A ban on physical goods would have also adversely affected India's business and economy while hardly making a dent on China's.
- The move is thus being seen as one that could be more effective from New Delhi's perspective.

**Source: Indian Express**



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