

SECURITY THREAT India bans 54 more Chinese apps

NDTV ONLINE

India banned 54 Chinese apps that pose threat to the country's security, the ministry of electronics and information technology said yesterday.

"These 54 apps allegedly obtain various critical permissions and collects sensitive user data. These collected real-time data are being misused and transmitted to servers located in hostile country," the ministry said in a statement.

The list of banned apps include - Sweet Selfie HD, Beauty Camera - Selfie Camera, Garena Free Fire - Illuminate, Viva Video Editor, Tencent Xriver, Onmyoji Arena, AppLock and Dual Space Lite.

In June last year, India banned 59 Chinese mobile applications including the widely-used social media platforms such as TikTok, WeChat, and Helo citing a threat to the nation's sovereignty and security.

The apps were banned under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, a ministry said.

Later in September, India further blocked 118 Chinese mobile apps saying they are "prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the state and public order".

However, China opposed India's decision to continue the ban on Chinese mobile apps and said the action is in violation of the World Trade Organisation's non-discriminatory principles.

The first round of bans was announced in June 2020, days after 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a clash with Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh.

The eastern Ladakh border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Lake areas and both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.



A member of the Hijra community holding a vaccine card after they were given a Covid shot at a temporary vaccination booth set up near Shaheed Minar on the Dhaka University campus yesterday. The government launched a special inoculation drive for floating people on February 6.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

He was to come home this Friday

Bangladeshi ex-army man among 5 UN officials abducted in Yemen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

He was supposed to arrive in Bangladesh on February 18. Before going to work on Friday in Yemen, he spoke to his wife in Dhaka saying that he would call her back.

That was the last she heard from him. A Bangladeshi national, AKM Sufiul Anam, is among the five United Nations staff members who have been abducted in southern Yemen, foreign ministry and family sources have confirmed.

Anam works as a Field Security Coordination Officer (Head) of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security in Aden, Yemen.

He retired from Bangladesh Army as a lieutenant colonel, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen, who is now abroad, confirmed to The Daily Star through a Whatsapp message.

Anam served the Bangladesh Army from 1977 to 2005. Since he retired from the army, he has been working with the UN. He was supposed to retire from the UN job in December this year, a close relative said.

The relative told The Daily Star the family is shocked and extremely concerned.

"We don't know why they abducted him. We just pray that he comes back safely," the relative said.

The relative further said that Anam called his wife on Friday and told her that he was going to duty and that he would call her back.

"Then there was no trace. On Saturday, the family received a call from the UN and got the bad news. The abductors demanded ransom. The UN is working. We hope that we would get him back unhurt," the relative added.

Hailing from Cumilla, Anam and his wife have a son and a daughter. His wife lives in Dhaka while their son and daughter live in Canada.

Earlier on Saturday, Reuters reported that the UN staff were abducted on Friday in Abyan governorate, quoting Russell Geekie, a spokesman for the top UN official in Yemen.

"The United Nations is in close contact with the authorities to secure their release," Geekie said.

Yemen's internationally recognised government, which is based in the

southern region of the country, was working to safely free the UN staff abducted by unknown gunmen, the country's official news agency said on Saturday citing a cabinet statement.

An official at the UN office in Aden told Reuters that four of those seized were Yemeni nationals.

Yemen has been mired in violence since the Iran-aligned Houthi movement ousted the government from the capital, Sanaa, in late 2014, prompting a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia to intervene months later.

Among Yemen's many destabilising forces are Islamist militant groups Al Qaeda and Islamic State that have in the past carried out attacks including in the south, which last year saw protests over deteriorating economic conditions.

The war has killed tens of thousands of people and caused a dire humanitarian crisis with 80 percent of Yemen's population reliant on aid.



No democracy in the country

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"The [recent] Union Parishad elections have showed us there is no democracy ... the corpse of democracy lies out there. Who will shoulder the responsibility for burying it?" he asked while addressing a press conference at the EC.

"Such anarchy across the country, in the name of elections, was never desired. The elections have given conflicts a permanent position at the grassroots level. The question of whether you can call it an election when candidates get elected unopposed is also there," he said.

He also said it is extremely important that the will of the people is

reflected in polls. "From Union Parishad polls to parliamentary elections, the reflection of the masses is absent everywhere.

"The use of money has especially been observed in those elections. Politics is slowly going into the hands of the businesspeople. My question is will lawmakers start doing business with laws in future?"

Mahbub further said people's voting rights and human rights are two sides of the same coin. "It is absurd to talk about human rights in Bangladesh. There are no human rights, there is no human dignity, these cannot exist without democracy.

"At present, development is being

given all the priorities. Lawmakers are more interested in development than in legislation. But development is never an alternative to democracy."

Asked why he did not participate in the last press conference addressed by the outgoing chief election commissioner and two other commissioners, Mahbub said, "I didn't join it because I may not be able to speak there freely. I don't speak in the tone of the BNP. I actually don't know what that tone is."

He added, "I am one of the five [EC commissioners]. There were instances where I was not allowed to speak in [commission] meetings. I lost my battle as I was a minority among them."

CEC Huda not embarrassed

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In many centres, the CEC once again said the commission could do nothing as no aggrieved person had gone to court.

Asked if their activities and operations would embarrass them after their tenure, Nurul Huda said, "There will be no embarrassment. We did not have any shortcomings in holding legal elections. So, there is no embarrassment or weaknesses."

He said the EC led by him has tried its best to perform its functions and faced many challenges while in office. "We succeeded in overcoming those challenges."

Huda said the EC under him has held 6,690 elections and completed work outside routine and taken steps to revise electoral laws and rules.

He said that holding all the elections was a challenge for them amid the pandemic.

The EC was successful in performing its three functions -- holding parliamentary elections, delimitation of constituencies and preparation of electoral rolls, he added.

"We could not fully contain polls violence and deaths; we are sorry for that," he said.

"We have tried to earn the confidence of all political parties, gave them plenty of time, listened to them. Now after hearing their statements, I don't think many of them are satisfied and see that we could not win their confidence."

The CEC refuted the allegations that the election atmosphere was destroyed and the 2018 national election during their tenure was the "worst one", saying more than 70 percent people cast votes and candidates with different symbols won in the election.

"How was the election system destroyed?" he asked. "I don't know."

"There were debates over the Election Commission in the past; I hope there will be no debate over the commission in the future."

Huda said there may have been some irregularities involving field officials while conducting elections, but they have taken steps whenever wrongdoing was proved in probe.

Asked about numerous allegations of ballot stuffing on the night before election day, he once again refuted it by saying no returning officers or the media reported it.

At this point, Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam said they have talked with chiefs of different political parties on December 30, 2018, when the parliamentary polls were held and they said elections were being held "wonderfully". One of them

is now bringing allegations.

Huda said once the returning officer sends results and it is published in gazettes, the EC has nothing to do. "Then someone could have gone to court. I urged them to go to court, but they did not."

The CEC said he still thinks the aggrieved candidates could have gone to court.

Asked why the EC did not probe the matter that cent percent votes were cast in many polling stations in the last general election, he said, "It was abnormal and now the EC cannot do anything. After the publishing of the gazettes on winning candidates, the matter is not in the hands of the EC; it is now a matter for the court."

Queried why the EC had not stopped the latest Barishal City Corporation elections although Election Commissioner

Mahbub Talukdar wanted them to be postponed in the wake of allegations of irregularities, Huda said they had not received any complaints from the returning officer.

"We have asked Mahbub Talukdar to give it in writing, and on that basis, we could have stopped the election ... it was about 4:20pm by the time Mahbub Talukdar gave the report. By then there was no way to stop the whole election," he said.

He said eminent citizens had brought "false and fabricated" allegations of corruption and misconduct against the EC.

Election Commissioner Kabita Khanam also spoke at the press conference. Commissioner Mahbub did not join it even though he was at the EC office, while another commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Shahadat Hossain could not be present as he was Covid-19 positive.

HC questions

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Star that his client Anannya Das Gupta has been deprived of her father's shares by her brother Anirban Das Gupta due to the rules of Usage of Dayabhaga School of Thought of Hindu Religion.

The rules of Usage of the Dayabhaga School of Thought of Hindu Religion have been followed in distributing properties of the Hindu community for hundreds of years in

Bangladesh and parts of India including the West Bengal.

The provisions of this customary law are contradictory to articles 27, 28, 31 and 42 of the constitution of Bangladesh, he went on to say.

The High Court may appoint amice curiae (friends of the court) on Sunday for placing expert opinions on the issue of Hindu inheritance, Chowdhury said.