

New Delhi bans all web taxis after Uber rape claim

NEW DELHI, INDIA: New Delhi has extended a ban on Uber to all web-based taxi services in the Indian capital, as the US-based operator said it would continue operating despite the order, which followed a rape allegation against one of its drivers.

The city government announced on Monday it was banning Uber with immediate effect after a young female passenger accused the driver of raping her over the weekend.

Hours later, it said all other taxi service providers that rely on "web-based technology" must also cease operating in the city because they did not comply with local regulations.

But an Uber executive told AFP on Tuesday that it was still operating in New Delhi and had received no formal notice from the government.

"We have not received any official notification (about the ban). If and when we do, we will of course appeal it," said the executive, who asked not to be named.

"As of now we have not stopped our operations in Delhi."

Delhi police said they had registered a case against the company for "cheating" and had summoned its officials for questioning over the alleged rape.

Police said Uber did not conduct a background check on the driver, who had been acquitted of a separate rape charge in 2012. Uber said it complied with local rules and background checks were not required.



As in other countries, traditional taxi drivers in India feel threatened by the Uber operation. (This image is used for illustrative purposes only) (Image attribution: © Jorge Royan / <http://www.royan.com.ar> / CC-BY-SA-3.0)

It is the latest setback for the popular but controversial San Francisco-based start-up, which lets customers hail and pay for taxis or private vehicles via a smartphone app.

The company's rapid growth has caused tensions, especially in Europe where rival taxi companies have protested that Uber cars are not subject to the same regulations.

Dutch judges on Monday ordered the company to shut down UberPOP, which allows non-professional drivers to register, saying it was against the law to charge for a ride without a licence.

Also on Monday, authorities in the US city of Portland, Oregon, asked a court to stop Uber from operating in the city, saying it did not comply with local rules.

In India, Uber says it works with licensed drivers and is a taxi aggregation service, putting passengers in touch with nearby available cabs.

The company set up its India operation in September 2013 and also provides services in 10 other cities across the country.

Unlike radio taxi services, which will be allowed to continue operating in Delhi, it does not have a 24-hour call centre operation, relying instead on Twitter and email for customer support.

The latest incident has once again raised the issue of women's safety in India, days before the second anniversary of a fatal gang-rape of a Delhi student that unleashed widespread outrage.

The victim dozed off in the taxi as she was returning home from dinner.

She told police she woke to find the taxi parked in a secluded place where the driver assaulted and raped her, before dumping her near her home in north Delhi.

India police say Uber driver accused of rape was on bail

NEW DELHI, US: The Uber driver accused of raping a passenger in New Delhi was on bail after being charged with assault, robbery and rape and was using a fake police certificate, Indian police said on Tuesday...

Shiv Kumar Yadav, 32, was arrested and remanded in custody after the passenger, who is in her mid-20s, accused him of raping her after she fell asleep in his cab on Friday night.

Uber has been banned from operating in the Indian capital and accused of failing to follow local regulations.

But the revelation that the driver was facing live charges is a major blow to the US-based taxi app service, already under fire for failing to carry out adequate background checks on its drivers.

A history of criminal activity

Yadav was charged with molestation in 2003, with possessing a weapon without a licence in 2006, and with robbery and rape in 2013, deputy commissioner for north Delhi police Madhur Verma told AFP by telephone.

"We checked with the police in Uttar Pradesh and can now confirm that he has three more criminal cases against him," said Verma, referring to Yadav's native state in northern India.

"He was out on bail from UP (Uttar Pradesh) courts."

Delhi police said earlier that the police certificate provided by the driver was a fake, without giving further details.

The certificate records any criminal charges or convictions against a driver, or the lack of them.

Women in danger

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Indian police have registered a case against Uber for "cheating" and summoned its officials for questioning over the alleged rape.

"Uber made certain promises but they were not honoured," Delhi police chief B.S. Bassi told reporters.

An Uber executive told AFP on Tuesday that it was still operating in Delhi and had received no formal notice from the city government.

"We have not received any official notification (about the ban). If and when we do, we will of course appeal it," said the executive, who asked not to be named.

"As of now we have not stopped our operations in Delhi."

The company has said it complied with local rules, which did not require a background check.

It says it works with licensed drivers, who must obtain a police certificate before they get their commercial driving licence.

Setback

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Uber's operations in 10 other Indian cities also hung in the balance after Home Minister Rajnath Singh told the upper house that an advisory had been issued to the states, asking them to "prohibit" unregistered web-based taxi services from operating.

Unlike radio taxi services, which will be allowed to continue operating in Delhi, these do not have a 24-hour call centre operation, relying instead on Twitter and email for customer support.

"Some of these web-based companies don't even follow the basic rules laid out for the sector," said Rajiv Vij of the Association of Radio Taxis.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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