

Uber restarts service in Delhi; govt says company still banned

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Uber, the U.S.-based online taxi-hailing company, has restarted services in India's capital after a ban following rape allegations against one of its drivers, but a government official said the company remains blacklisted.

Uber's app showed taxis available for booking in New Delhi on Friday. A company spokesman said Uber had applied for a radio taxi licence. Last month, the company had said such traditional radio taxi regulations were incompatible with its business model.

A senior government official said Uber was still banned in New Delhi and its taxis would be impounded.

"We have already directed enforcement teams to act on this," said the senior transport official, who requested anonymity as he was not authorised to speak with media.

Uber declined to comment on the government's reaction.

The transport official said taxis operated by other unregistered operators would also be impounded.

In Korea, Uber has already had to team up with another taxi firm to comply with local rules. It is also fighting bans in France, Spain and South Korea, imposed because some of its drivers were not correctly licensed. It has had to contend with further rape allegations against drivers in Chicago and Boston.

Uber chief executive officer Travis Kalanick has promised to create 50,000 jobs in European cities where Uber can operate.

SAFETY

India is Uber's largest market outside of the United States by number of cities covered, and the country's radio taxi market is estimated to be worth \$6 billion to \$9 billion.

But after the alleged rape last month, Delhi's government banned Uber and other taxi-hailing app providers from operating in the city.

Uber later said it did not carry out background checks on drivers in India, and authorities revealed the suspect was on bail for sexual assault.

The case triggered protests and re-ignited debate about the safety of women in Asia's third-largest economy.

Uber, valued at \$40 billion last month, said on Friday it would introduce additional safety measures including more stringent driver checks and an in-app emergency button.

"We are setting an even higher standard than current industry requirements," the company said in a statement. "Our commitment to make transportation safe in Indian cities has never been more absolute."

Local rival Ola, backed by Japan's SoftBank Corp, and TaxiForSure have also applied for licences. The apps of both companies are currently operating in the city.

Uber is offering its drivers in Delhi a bonus of 250 rupees for every trip until Jan. 31. "We wanted to party after the service restarted, everyone is very happy in the family," a driver said.