

Tencent-backed tech giant's hit game 'banned in India'

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Tech giant Sea, which is backed by China's Tencent, has apologised to users in India after its popular Free Fire game was reportedly among dozens of apps hit with a ban on national security concerns.

It was the latest volley between New Delhi and Beijing, with tensions between the two running high after a deadly 2020 clash in a disputed Himalayan border area.

Free Fire, one of the most downloaded [mobile games](#) in India, was among 54 apps banned that authorities said were of Chinese origin, according to several local media outlets.

Apps from Tencent and Baidu were also among those affected, the reports said.

New Delhi has previously banned more than 260 Chinese apps citing national security concerns, including video-sharing platform TikTok and popular [game](#) PUBG, prompting fury from Beijing.

Garena, the gaming subsidiary of Singapore-based Sea, did not confirm a ban had been imposed but said in a statement that it was "aware that Free Fire is currently unavailable in the Google Play and iOS app stores in India and that the game is currently not operable for some users in the country".

"We are working to address this situation, and we apologise to our users

for any inconvenience."

Sea's shares dived 18.4 percent in New York on Monday following reports of the ban.

Indian authorities were not immediately available for comment.

But the IT ministry told the Hindustan Times newspaper the apps collected [sensitive data](#), which was "transmitted to servers located in (a) hostile country" and could be used "for activities detrimental to national security".

Sea's founders are Chinese-born and became Singaporean citizens.

Chinese tech behemoth Tencent has an 18.7 percent stake in the firm.

Free Fire is an [action adventure game](#) that sees players parachute onto an island, and then search for weapons and equipment to kill other participants.

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