

# 'Disappointed' TikTok calls for lifting of ban



**ISLAMABAD:** The Chinese social media giant TikTok issued a cryptic statement which called for lifting of the ban on the app in return for a vague assurance centred on the "allocation of resources" to the Pakistani market.

"If the Government of Pakistan decides to reopen access to our services in the future, we will certainly assess our allocation of resources to this market," the carefully worded statement said.

According to some estimates, the app has been installed 43 million times in Pakistan, with 14.7 million of those coming in the year 2020 alone. The app was banned in the country on Oct 9 with the regulator citing "obscenity" as the reason.

Last Monday the app's management said they had held a virtual meeting with Pakistani officials to iron out any differences and strengthen content moderation. But on Saturday the management said no further response had been received from the government. The statement hailed the creative energies brought by Pakistani users to the platform, and said the company was prepared to invest further in Pakistan if differences could be resolved.

"Our services remain blocked in the country and we have received no communication from Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)," the statement said. "This is why we are disappointed that our users and creators in Pakistan are still unable to access TikTok,

more than one week after our services were blocked by the PTA," the press release said, adding that, "TikTok's mission is to inspire creativity and joy, and that is just what we've done in Pakistan". "After TikTok was blocked in Pakistan, we continued to engage with the PTA to demonstrate our commitment to comply with local laws and further enhance our content moderation capacity. Though the PTA acknowledged and appreciated these efforts, our services remain blocked in the country and we have received no communication from the PTA." "We continue to hope that our productive dialogue with the PTA can bring assurance of the government's commitment to a stable, enabling environment whereby we can explore investing further in the market, including in the inspiring talent we've seen thrive on TikTok."

Due to the ban, "Pakistan's vibrant online community was still unable to showcase its talent and creativity to the hundreds of millions of users worldwide; we look forward to being able to reconnect with the energetic and talented youth of Pakistan and play our role in the success story of Pakistan," the statement added. TikTok, which is owned by ByteDance company of China, has around 20 million active users per month, making it the third most popular social media app in the country after Facebook and WhatsApp.

Meanwhile, the information technology ministry spokesman strongly reacted to the statement of TikTok, saying that IT Minister Syed Aminul Haq had already stated recently that lifting of the ban rested on TikTok "abiding by local laws and not violating the traditions of the nation." The spokesman said TikTok would be allowed to operate in Pakistan if it followed rules and fulfilled all regulatory requirements to the satisfaction of the government. A senior PTA official said the TikTok management was clearly conveyed during the virtual meeting that compliance with the authority's instructions was essential. "The only issue is that TikTok is not providing a timeline for the results of the action it intends to take," the official said, adding that an application could not operate in a completely independent environment without any restriction or respect to religious and societal norms. "Internet content has to be safe from all threats; it should respect the sentiments of other communities and sections of society," the official added. TikTok had upgraded its community guidelines in September and also issued its Urdu version after PTA's final warning. But complaints from the telecom regulator continued to pour in of objectionable content being posted on the platform. An appeal has also been filed in the Islamabad High Court against the ban on the video-sharing app by a private citizen who argues his business has been badly affected by the ban.

## 2021 iPhone shock as 'all-new' apple iPhone revealed



Coming just one week after leaks revealed Apple will finally reduce the size of the notch and introduce 120Hz ProMotion refresh rates in its 2021 iPhones, we now know Touch ID is returning as well. In short, while it's a shock to receive this information so early, the features everyone wanted this year are coming next year. The latest details

come from acclaimed Apple insider L0vetodream and was subsequently endorsed by Jon Prosser, who also has a superb 2020 track record. The former cryptically tweeted that "MESA uts" is headed to the iPhone, which Prosser decoded explaining that MESA is Apple's internal name for Touch ID and 'uts' stands for 'under the screen'.

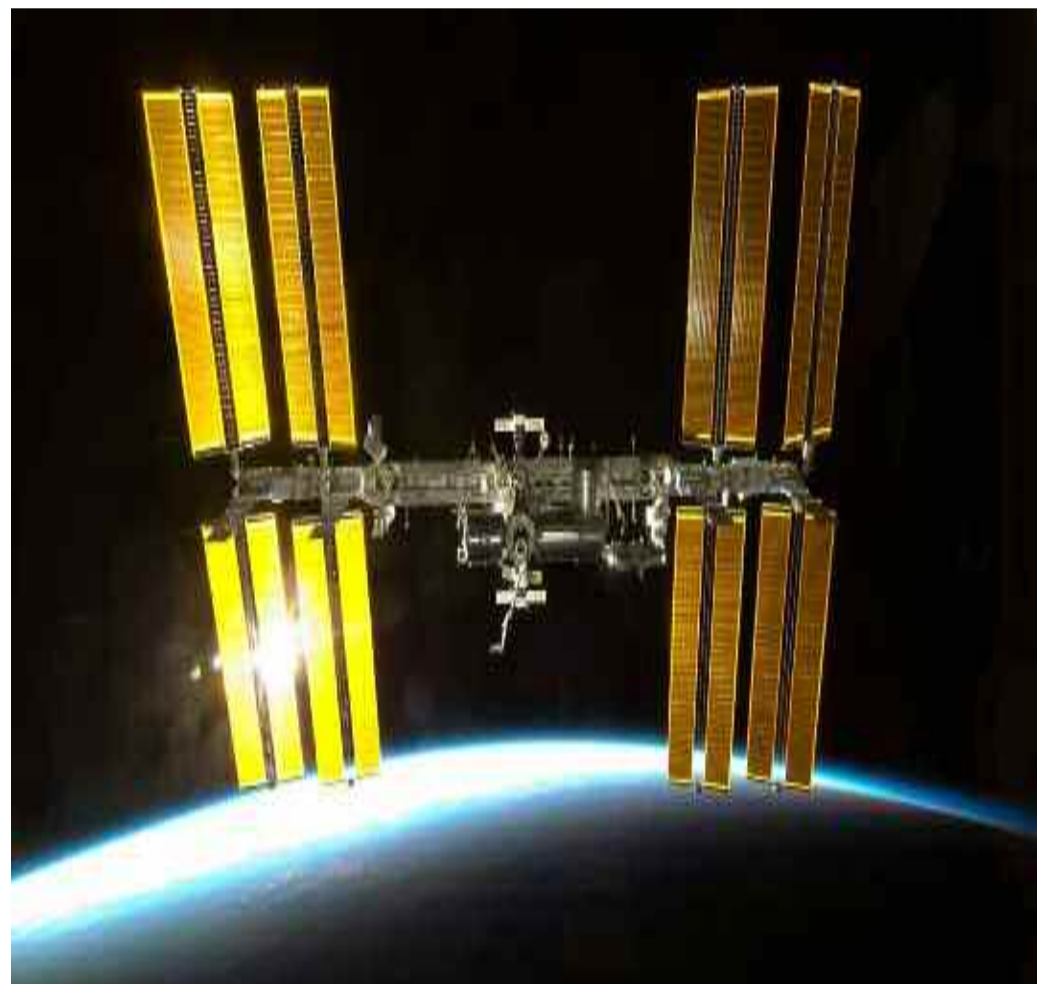
And this makes a lot of sense. First, Apple has been filing numerous in-display Touch ID patents for over a year. Second, Face ID has become a lot less useful during a global pandemic where masks are being widely worn with no end date in sight. Third, support for dual biometrics (Face ID is here to stay) delivers military-grade levels of security for banking and health data and aligns with Apple's privacy-focused marketing and plans to integrate passports into future iPhones. Apple, iPhone, new iPhone, iPhone 12, iPhone 12 Pro, iPhone 12 Pro Max, iPhone 12 mini, iPhone 12 release, Apple's iPhone 12 range looks great but has several surprising compromises Apple 2021 will also deliver Apple's next big iPhone camera leap and remove the current limitation of the iPhone 12 lineup to work on the fastest 5G standards outside America. So there's a lot to look forward to. Yes, if you desperately need a new iPhone then Apple's four new iPhone 12 models will be perfectly good replacements. But if you don't mind holding off until next year, Apple will release the iPhone you really wanted all along. —

## Crew members patch a small leak on the ISS

For months crewmembers aboard the International Space Station have been working to pinpoint the source of the leak that has been very annoying for the crew aboard the station and ground workers. Crewmembers have worked to figure out where exactly the leak is located and patch it. NASA has been clear that the crew members aboard the ISS were never in danger from the leak.

After searching for the leak's source since September 2019, cosmonauts aboard the space station have finally tracked down the source of the leak this week and attempted to patch it. Reports of the attempted patch come from Russian government-owned news service Tass. The source of the leak was determined to be in the Russian Zvezda module. Past tracking had suggested that it was the location of the leak. Russian cosmonaut Ivan Vagner called the source of the leak inside the module a "scratch," according to the Tass report. As for the success of the patch, it appears that it's not expected to hold.

Mission controllers say that the air leak has slowed, but the module is still losing pressure. One suggestion has been made is to reach out to the American astronauts aboard the space station for a different type of patch mechanism. Another problem has arose with the same module with a failed oxygen supply system. The oxygen system failed on Wednesday of this week after the three new crew members arrived at the station. Ground controllers say that the failed oxygen supply system poses no hazard to the crewmembers. Both issues are attributed to the space station's age. It has been in orbit continuously staffed for the last 20 years. The oldest part of the space station was placed in orbit in 1998.



## Very first forms of life may have been more animal-like than we ever realised

Early life may have been far more like animals than we thought, suggests new research that shows bacteria can 'develop' like an embryo.

When bacteria band together, they ooze out a protective communal home of slime to form thriving, densely packed colonies known as biofilms. Together these teeny organisms are more powerful. Within the safety of the biofilm, they can better withstand environmental changes, communicate long-range to cells outside their communities, and even share a collective memory of sorts — essentially behaving like one multicellular organism.

Now an international team of researchers led by evolutionary geneticist Momir Futo from the Ruder Bošković Institute in Croatia has discovered biofilms develop like a multicellular organism, too. Most cells on Earth live in the form of these biofilms. They can be composed of multiple species, and we're increasingly finding more ways in which they act like multicellular beings —

including division of labour, programmed cell death, and self-recognition. Bacillus subtilis biofilms. (Momir Futo/Ruder Bošković Institute) Bacillus subtilis biofilms. (Momir Futo/Ruder Bošković Institute)

In the lab, Futo and the team investigated rod-shaped Bacillus subtilis, which is commonly found in soil, cows, and us. The researchers established a timeline of gene expression across the whole biofilm as it developed, from a few initial cells until it was two months old. They also compared the products of the bacteria's genes with those of others in its family tree, mapping out a timeline for their evolutionary relationships.

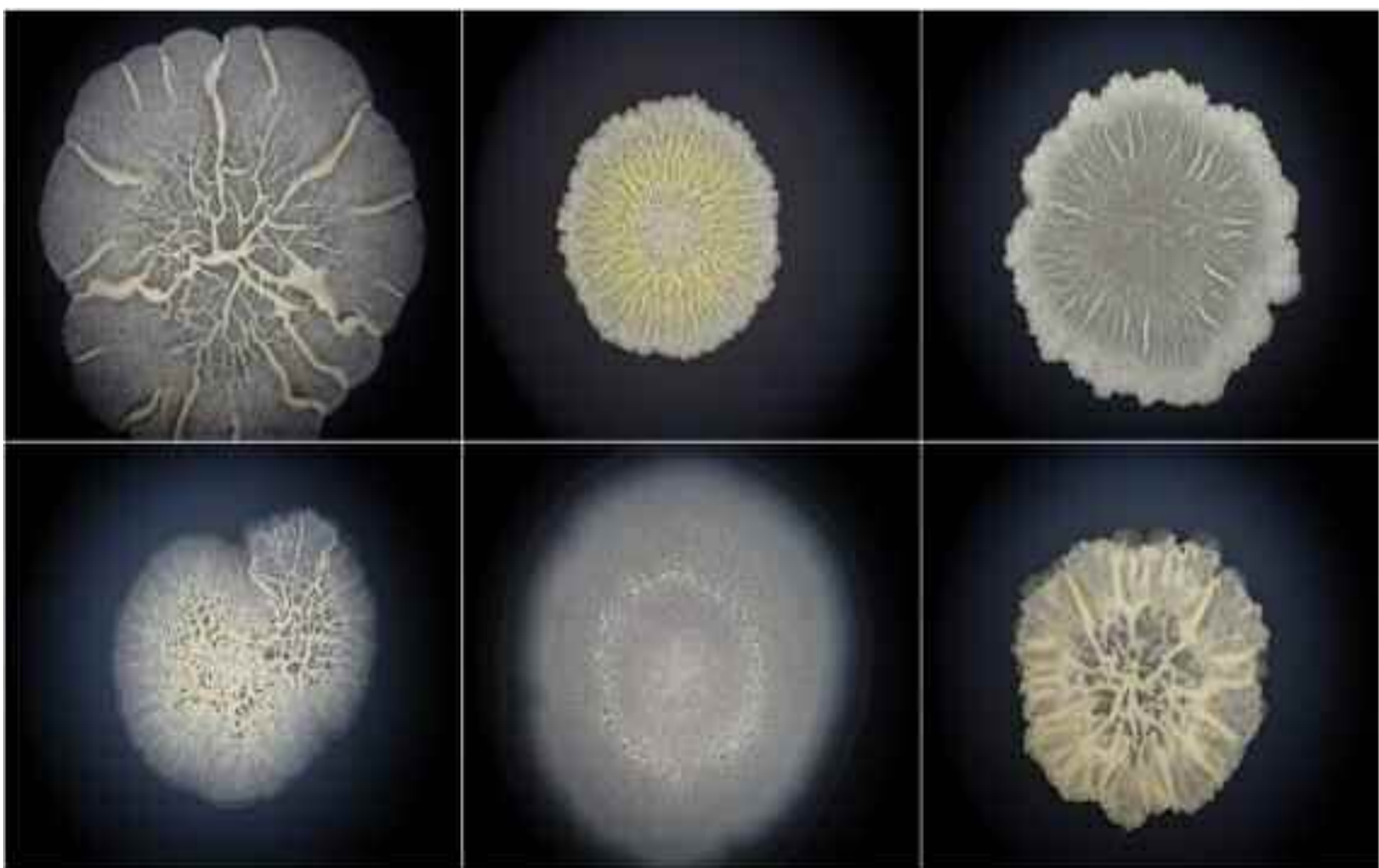
"Surprisingly, we found that evolutionary younger genes were increasingly expressed towards the later timepoints of biofilm growth," explained geneticist Tomislav Domazet-Lošo from the Catholic University of Croatia.

The order of gene expression during biofilm growth mirrors the timing of these

genes' evolution — just like the expressions of genes in developing animal embryos. And that is not the only way the biofilms mimicked embryogenesis (the development of an animal embryo). The step-by-step organisation of the gene expression observed is also seen in embryos, as is a big increase in communication between cells during the middle of development, which in the biofilm coincides with growing 3D wrinkles.

"This means that bacteria are true multicellular organisms just like we are," said Domazet-Lošo. "Considering that the oldest known fossils are bacterial biofilms, it is quite likely that the first life was also multicellular, and not a single-celled creature as considered so far."

The phylostratigraphy method the researchers used is relatively new and still has some questions around its reliability, so the team double-checked their results using older genetic tools, and found they supported their findings. —Agencies



## Want to change your Zoom background? Here's how to do it

The coronavirus pandemic forced people to work and learn from home, causing a surge to connect via the internet — here's when Zoom came into play and helped people remain connected.

The app has an exciting feature of changing a user's background, from outer space to the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge, and people can also upload a custom background of their choice. Playing with the background will help in attracting the audience, as it might cheer up people who have remained in lockdown for a considerable period. However, you need to make sure that you have the required features in your system that can support the option of changing the background.

### Changing Zoom background on desktop

1. Open the Zoom app.
2. Click your profile in the top right

corner and open settings.

3. On the left in the menu, click "Virtual Background".

4. You can either choose Zoom's default background options or if you want to upload a photo to use as your background, on the same "Virtual Background" page, click the + icon next to where it says "Choose Virtual Background".

5. A box will pop up allowing you to upload a photo from your computer. Click on the one you want.

6. To get rid of any photos you upload, tap the "X" in the top left corner. Changing Zoom background on mobile

1. During a Zoom meeting, you will see three dots at the bottom right of the screen, tap on it to open the "More" menu.

2. Tap "Virtual Background".

3. Select a background from the default options or upload your own.

## Amid tensions with China, India warns Amazon, Flipkart over country of origin rule

**MUMBAI:** The Indian government has warned Amazon.com's local unit and Walmart's Flipkart that sellers on their platforms are not complying with a rule requiring that a product's country of origin be specified.

A push for strict enforcement of the rule has come amid tensions between India and China following a border skirmish which began in June, and is part of India's efforts to cut down on Chinese-made imports. The two e-commerce firms have been given 15 days to explain the lapses or action will be taken against them, according to an Oct. 16 letter addressed to the companies from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and seen by Reuters.

It did not specify what action may be taken, referring only to a legal act that has provisions for fines. Representatives

for Amazon and Flipkart did not immediately respond to Reuters requests seeking comment outside regular business hours. In addition to enforcing the country of origin rule, New Delhi has also banned 177 Chinese mobile applications since June while Chinese goods in ports have faced extra scrutiny and delays. Amazon has often faced regulatory challenges in India. Last year, the government enforced strict rules for foreign investment in e-commerce which forced the U.S. retail giant to rework its business structures and strained ties between New Delhi and Washington. In January, the Competition Commission of India ordered an investigation into Amazon and Flipkart over alleged violations of competition law and certain discounting practices, which Amazon is challenging, according to court filings. —Reuters