

Uber files

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In news— A former worker at Uber has recently revealed himself as the whistleblower who provided The Guardian with 124,000 company records that constitute The Uber Files.

What are Uber Files?

- The cache of internal emails, text messages, and documents are the files that The Guardian shared with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and its media partners around the world.
- Over 124,000 leaked confidential documents have **exposed how ride-hailing app Uber entered new markets during its massive boom** in the last decade **by taking unethical and even illegal routes.**
- They show how the Uber became a global behemoth by harnessing technology, working around laws, and employing aggressive lobbying with governments during the period of its dramatic expansion.
- In the context of India, one such file reportedly highlights how Uber blamed India's "flawed" criminal database, instead of taking responsibility for a driver accused of raping a 25-year-old passenger in New Delhi in December 2014.
- **It is also reported that Uber uses an internal tactic called the "kill switch"** to escape raids by the government by shutting down internal software.
- It involves Uber officials learning about possible raids at its offices and sending instructions to IT staff to cut off access to the company's main data systems. It essentially prevents authorities from gathering evidence.
- The Guardian noted that Uber deployed this tactic at least 12 times during raids in India, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary and Romania.

About International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ)-

- It is an independent global network of 280 investigative journalists and over 100 media organizations spanning more than 100 countries.
- It is based in Washington, D.C. with personnel in Australia, France, Spain, Hungary, Serbia, Belgium and Ireland.
- The ICIJ was launched in 1997 by American journalist Charles Lewis as an initiative of the Center for Public Integrity, with the aim of exposing crime and corruption that transcended national boundaries.
- In 2017, it became a fully independent organization and was later granted nonprofit status.
- The ICIJ investigates a broad range of matters concerning “cross-border crime, corruption, and the accountability of power.”
- The ICIJ has exposed smuggling and tax evasion by multinational tobacco companies (2000), by organized crime syndicates; investigated private military cartels, asbestos companies, and climate change lobbyists; and broke new ground by publicizing details of Iraq and Afghanistan war contracts.
- Along with German firm, ICIJ played an important role in releasing Panama papers.