

BRITAIN BANS HUAWEI FROM FUTURE ROLE IN 5G NETWORK

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Britain's government on Tuesday backtracked on plans to give Chinese telecommunications company Huawei a limited role in the U.K.'s new high-speed mobile phone network in a decision with broad implications for relations between London and Beijing.

Britain said it imposed the ban after U.S. sanctions made it impossible to ensure the security of Huawei equipment, forcing it to start turning to other suppliers for components. The U.S. threatened to sever an intelligence-sharing arrangement with the U.K. because of concerns Huawei equipment could allow the Chinese government to infiltrate U.K. networks.

U.K. Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said the decision would delay the 5G rollout and cost millions of pounds, but that it had to be done. "This has not been an easy decision but it is the right one," he said.

No new purchases

The decision gives British telecom operators until 2027 to remove Huawei equipment already in Britain's 5G network. The operators must stop buying 5G equipment from Huawei by the end of the year.

Critically for telecom operators, the government opted not to order firms to rip out legacy equipment manufactured by Huawei in earlier systems, like 4G. Such a decision might have caused havoc in U.K. telecom systems.

Mr. Johnson in January sought to balance economic and security pressures by agreeing to give Huawei a limited role in Britain's so-called 5G network, excluding the company from core components of the system and restricting its involvement to 35% of the overall project.

But the move set up a diplomatic clash with the Americans, who threatened to cut off security cooperation unless Britain dumped Huawei.

Huawei called the decision "disappointing" and motivated by politics.

Mr. Dowden conceded that Tuesday's announcement means more Britons will have to wait longer to get full access to the speedy new network. "This means a cumulative delay to 5G roll-out of two to three years and costs of up to £2 billion," he said.

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