

Google's Latest Antitrust Trial Most Consequential Case of Internet Era

Why In News

- The US Department Of Justice, Along With A Coalition Of 37 States, Contends That Google Is Illegally Stifling Competition By Paying Billions To Companies Like Apple And Mozilla Firefox To Remain As The Default Search Provider In Mobile Phones And Web Browsers.
- The US Government Commenced A 10-Week Trial To Ascertain Whether Tech Giant Google Is Unlawfully Abusing Its Dominance In The Search Engine Market To Eliminate Competition And Maintain Its Monopoly.



US Government's Case Against Google

- Google Has Illegally Protected Its Internet Search Monopoly Using Deals Struck With Smartphone Makers.
- Government's Lawsuit Focuses On Billions Of Payments Google Has Made To Apple, Samsung, Mozilla And Others To Be Pre-Installed As The Default Online Search Engine.



- The US Said Google Typically Pays More Than \$10bn A Year For That Privilege, Securing Its Access To A Steady Gush Of User Data That Helped Maintain Its Hold On The Market.
- Regulators Also Charge That Google Has Illegally Rigged The Market In Its Favor By Requiring Its Search Engine To Be Bundled With Its Androvide Software For Smartphones If The Device Manufacturers Want Full Access To The Android App Store The Government Said The Browser Agreements Resulted In Less Choice For Consumers And Hurt Innovation.



How has Google responded

- Denying That It Had Illegally Used These Agreements To Exclude Its Competitors, Google Said That It Had Simply Provided A Superior Product.
- Google Said That Its Browser Agreements Were Legitimate Competition And Not Illicit Exclusion.



- The Agreements Did Not Prevent Rivals From Developing Their Own Search Engines Or Stop Companies Such As Apple And Mozilla From Promoting Them.
- Google's Perspective Perpetual Improvements To Its Search Engine Explain Why People Almost Reflectively Keep Coming Back To It.
- A Habit That Long Ago Made Googling Synonymous With The Looking Things Up On Her Internet.



- Google Further Adds That Mobile Users Can Switch Easily If They Want To Use Another Search Engine.

What Is The Legal Position

- Although It Is "Generally" Not Illegal And Quite Common For Businesses To Make Arrangements With One Customer While Excluding Others, Such Deals Do Not Attract Regulatory Scrutiny When Involving Companies Without Any Market Power.

- However, Such Exclusive Deals Can Violate Antitrust Laws If Companies Are So Powerful That They Can Prevent Rivals From Entering The Market Without Proving That The Limited Competition Is Outweighed By A Positive Effect On Consumers.



What Happens Next

- The Final Decision In This Case Rests With Justice Amit P Meta Of The Us District Court, Who Was Appointed By Former Us President Barack Obama In 2014 And Has Overseen Several Antitrust Trials.
- The Trial Is Expected To Last 10 Weeks And Will Feature Testimonies From Google Ceo Sundar Pichai As Well As Executives From Apple.



Some Other Antitrust Cases

- In The Past, IBM, AT&T, Intel, And Microsoft Were Famously Flummoxed For Years By Antitrust Cases That Dragged On, Much As Google And Meta Are Today.
- Microsoft Was Similarly Accused Of Using Its Massive Market Power To Unfairly Eliminate Its Competition In The Arena Of Personal Computers. However, In

That Case, The Trial Court Ruled That Microsoft Unlawfully Tried To Block Its Rival Browser, Netscape Navigator.

