Digital companies demand new Google anti-trust probe

PARIS, FRANCE: The Open Internet Project (OIP), which includes 400 companies in Europe's digital markets, lodged a complaint with the European Commission against what it alleges are new anti-competitive abuses by Google.

Google's Kent Walker says the investigation by the European Commission was "very thorough". Image: Re-think Law

In a submission, the group accused the US Internet company of abusing its "insurmountable" 90% market share to abuse competitors and illegally using data to squeeze out rivals.

"European Consumers and Digital Entrepreneurs demand (a) ban of Google's manipulative favouring of own services and content," said a statement from the group, which includes digital publishers Axel Springer and CCM Benchmark, online publishers, tour operators, and consumer associations.

The world's top Internet search engine reached a deal with EU in February in which it agreed to display rivals' links more prominently in a bid to end a three-year case and avoid a fine of up to €5.0bn.

"This has been a very long and very thorough investigation," Google executive Kent Walker said about the agreement.

But rivals and those companies included in the OIP, argue that the concessions do not go far enough and will only entrenc Google's dominance of the online market.

"The European Commission is planning to give in to Google by concluding a settlement largely behind closed doors that would in principle legalise Google's self-preference," said the statement.

They are demanding a thorough analysis of all Google's anti-competitive practices, want the EU to impose a review mechanism for algorithm changes and impose obligations on Google to supply or licence its data to other companies.

The new complaint comes after the European Union's top court said that individuals had the right to ask Google to delete personal data collected via its search engine.

Some analysts say the ruling raises questions about online censorship and manipulation of search results.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge