

Google was forced to pay a fine of Rs 1,338 crores by three young informants

Three young informants, Umar Javeed, Aaqib and Sukarma Thapar finally forced Google to pay a whopping fine of Rs 1,338 crore for abusing its dominant position in multiple markets with its Android mobile operating system.

While Umar Javeed and Sukarma Thapar were then working as research associates with the Competition Commission of India (CCI), Umar's younger brother Aaqib was then a law student at the University of Kashmir.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) , the national competition regulator, is responsible for promoting competition and preventing activities that have an appreciable adverse effect on market competition in India.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) came into existence in March 2009 by Government of India under the Competition Act, 2002 for the administration, implementation, and enforcement of the Act. Eliminate practices having adverse effects on competition. Promote and sustain competition. Protect the interests of consumers.

Umar and Aaqib belong to the Valley. That Google was abusing its dominant position in multiple markets was the complaint

filed by the three young informants back in 2018.

The three young informants are all lawyers now, with Umar working at a public sector undertaking, Aaqib a practising advocate in Delhi and Sukarma an independent consultant for law and policy.

Umar said that compiling evidence was a tough task because they only had access to consumer-facing information to support their cause.

"We can look at an Android phone and say there are some Google-owned apps that cannot be deleted even if we wanted to, but besides that, as consumers, we have little information on how exactly Android smartphone manufacturers and app developers are affected by the role Google plays in the Android ecosystem," he explained.

Aaqib said that the three of them were already interested in how the digital market was shaping up in India and how the policies and laws governing technology were influencing consumers and tech companies.

"There were many late nights and early mornings where we would just work throughout the night.

"I was still a law student then and helping these guys meant I was juggling research along with studying for exams and assignments," Aaqib said.

"We had to focus on our day jobs and then research for this later in the day. That is when we would have some free time," Sukarma said.

Then, events related to Google in Europe caught the trio's attention. *"In July 2018, the European Commission (the EU's competition watchdog) imposed one of its largest fines on Google of 4.34 billion Euros for violating EU antitrust rules," Umar said.*

After considering this information provided by the three informants, the CCI started an investigation in April 2019 into Google's conduct in the Android mobile device ecosystem which eventually resulted in the October 2020 CCI judgment and fine.

In its response, Google said it would review the competition watchdog's decision. *"CCI's decision is a major setback for Indian consumers and businesses opening serious security risks for Indians and raising the cost of mobile devices for Indians."*

CCI has, however, not been successful in going all out in such anti-competitive activities by Google. Apart from the current penalties, Google also faces a probe from CCI in two other cases and these cases will serve as a 'guidance note' for other companies which may be flouting competition rules.