

Japan anti-trust authorities to investigate tech giants

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Japan's Fair Trade Commission is to investigate tech giants such as Google and Amazon are using their market-leader positions to exploit contractors or obstruct competition

Japan's anti-trust authorities will probe whether tech giants such as Google and Amazon are using their market-leader positions to exploit

contractors or obstruct competition, the country's fair trade chief said Thursday.

In an interview with the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper, the head of Japan's Fair Trade Commission (JFTC) said the investigation would take place next year.

"We will probe whether 'platformers' are obstructing the technological innovation of Japanese companies," Kazuyuki Sugimoto told the daily.

The term "platformers" refers to [tech](#) giants that dominate their sector, and includes Amazon, Apple, Google and Facebook.

He said the probe would "study whether client data hoarding is obstructing newcomers from entering the market, or whether their dominant positions in the market are forcing their business partners to cut prices."

The investigation would involve meetings with the businesses and their partners, and could see the anti-trust watchdog summon company officials and order documents handed over "if necessary," he said.

In March, the Japanese unit of Amazon said it was cooperating with authorities after the JFTC raided its Tokyo headquarters on allegations of anti-trust violations.

Local media reported the raids were related to allegations that Amazon Japan improperly demanded fees from suppliers, with public broadcaster NHK reporting the firm told suppliers it would stop working with them if they did not pay.

The decision by anti-trust authorities to launch an investigation comes as European authorities crack down on US tech giants.

Earlier this year, the European Union issued a record 4.34 billion euro (\$5 billion) anti-trust fine to US tech giant Google, accusing it of using the Android system's huge popularity to promote its Google search engine and shut out rivals.

Google has appealed the decision, arguing that the EU's accusations were unfounded, but said last month it would comply with the decision in order to avoid further fines.

And the European Parliament in September approved a controversial EU copyright law that hands more power to news and record companies against [internet giants](#) like Google and Facebook, though the firms have pledged to fight that ruling.

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