

## 'Sharing is Caring'

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**1. What is the Google 'monopoly' antitrust case and how does it affect consumers?****Why in News?**

On August 5, Google lost a major antitrust case brought against it by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) that sought to establish that the tech giant had a monopoly in the web search and advertising sectors. The trial took place before the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The lawsuit accused Google of using its dominant position in the search engine market to elbow out rivals and maintain monopoly. Its exclusive deals with handset makers were brought before the court as evidence. In the end, U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta ruled that Google was a monopolist.

**What did the ruling state?**

According to the ruling, Google's search dominance was majorly achieved through a strategy of exclusive distribution agreements, or default distribution. This refers to the way Google entered into lucrative contracts with "browser developers, mobile device manufacturers, and wireless carriers" so that it was the first or default search engine that users of such services or new phones were given. Google pays for this privilege and has shelled out more than \$26 billion for it in 2021, per the court.

**Where does Google dominate?**

Product Markets	Court Ruling
General search services	Google has monopoly power
General search text ads	Google has monopoly power
Search advertising	Google lacks monopoly power
General search advertising	No product market for this

Source: US. v. Google Judge Mehta ruling

However, some of the court's conclusions were in favour of the tech giant. It was determined that Google did not have monopoly power in the search advertising market. The court also noted there was no product market for general search advertising and that Google was not liable for actions involving its advertising platform.

Interestingly, the judge observed that Google had brought out the "industry's highest quality search engine, which has earned Google the trust of hundreds of millions of daily users."

### **How do monopolistic practices harm consumer experience?**

Regulators around the world monitor how businesses use technology in their countries, to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of a few entities. This ensures healthy competition in the market segment, so that all participants are striving to do better for their customers. When a monopoly comes into existence, however, rivals may be forced out of the market while the company with the most power is able to abuse customers because they have very few other options. Such companies also lose the incentive to keep improving the quality of their product.

The court ruling in the Google case even pointed to this as a risk factor.

### **What happens next?**

Google will be appealing the ruling. In the meantime, the court has asked both parties, Google and the Department of Justice, to find a remedy ahead of their meeting with Judge Mehta on September 9. The remedy, in this case, could range anywhere between breaking up Google to ordering the search giant to end its exclusive deals with mobile makers.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Economics

Source: The Hindu

## **2. SC bail to Sisodia: Why Bench said trial delay, bail right must be read into PMLA Sec 45**

### **Why in News?**

Underlining that delay in trial and a long period of pre-trial incarceration is a ground to bypass the stringent bail conditions in money laundering cases, the Supreme Court granted bail to former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia.

### **Bail conditions under law**

Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2005 prescribes a rather high bar for granting bail. The negative language in the provision itself shows that bail is not the rule but the exception under PMLA and both trial and constitutional courts are required to apply a 'triple test' to grant bail.

These three conditions are: (i) that there are "reasonable grounds for believing that (the accused) is not guilty of such offence"; (ii) that "he is not likely to commit any offence while on bail"; and (iii) that the accused is not a flight risk.



### View of Government advocate

In Sisodia's case, Additional Solicitor General SV Raju had argued that the Supreme Court's rejection of bail in the earlier round of litigation in October 2023 meant that there was a judicial agreement on a "prima facie" case against Sisodia which disqualified him from being granted bail again.

### View of Supreme Court

However, without dealing with that argument on merits, the bench comprising Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan said that delay in trial must be read into Section 45 since it is "clear that there is not even the remotest possibility of the trial being concluded in the near future." The bench held that a constitutional mandate to ensure speedy trial is the higher law, compared to the statutory provisions that fetter the grant of bail.

Such a reminder from the top court, in ED cases where the PMLA turns the adage its head, will have ramifications in other cases. If not on merits of the case, the accused will seek bail on the grounds of delay in trial.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 3. Japan issues its first-ever 'megaquake advisory': What does it mean?

### Why in News?



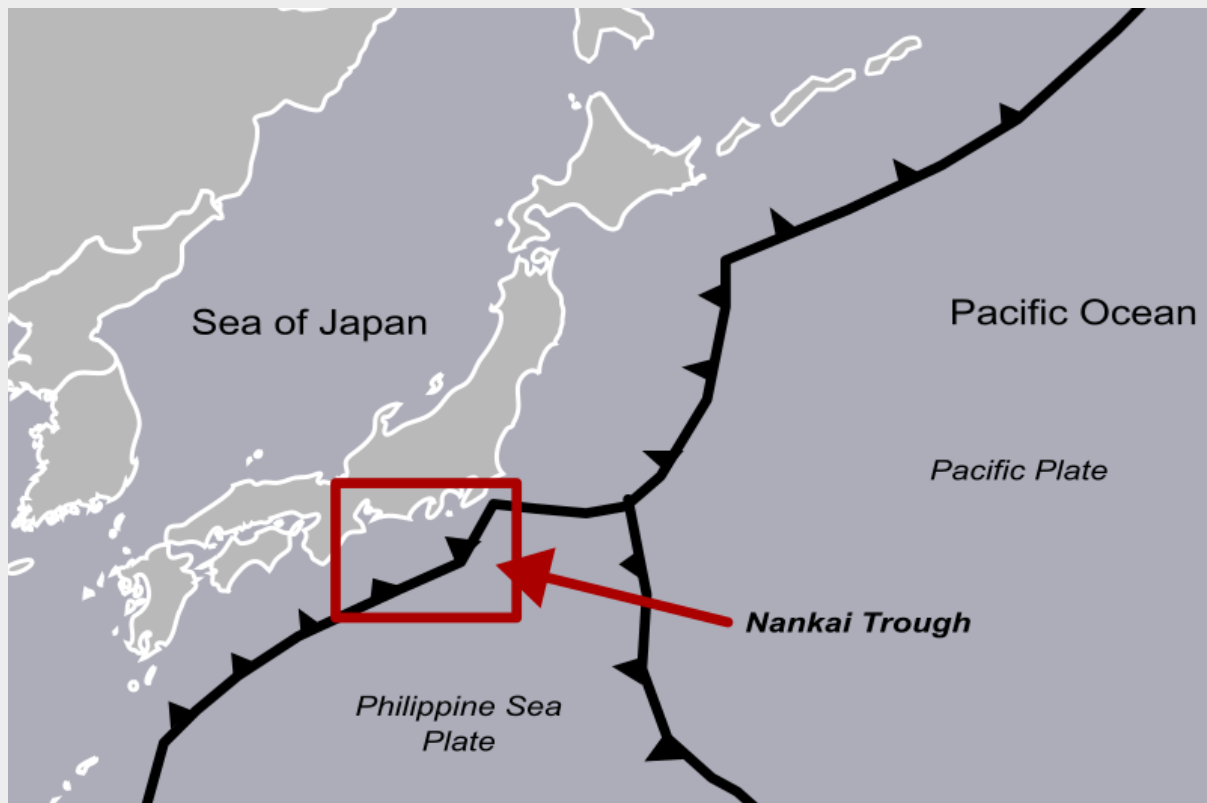
After a 7.1-magnitude earthquake shook southern Japan, the country's meteorological agency issued its first-ever "megaquake advisory".

The warning said the likelihood of strong shaking and large tsunamis is higher than normal on the Nankai Trough, a subduction zone (a region where tectonic plates collide with each other, and the heavier one slides under another) along Japan's southwest Pacific coast.

However, this does not mean that a major earthquake would definitely happen during a specific period, the advisory said.

### What is the Nankai Trough?

The Nankai Trough is an underwater subduction zone (nearly 900 km long) where the Eurasian Plate collides with the Philippine Sea Plate, pushing the latter under the former and into the Earth's mantle. This accumulates tectonic stress which can cause a megaquake — an earthquake with a magnitude larger than 8.



### **Rationale behind prediction**

The trough has produced large earthquakes roughly every 100 to 150 years. These tremors usually come in pairs, with the second often rupturing in the subsequent two years — the most recent “twin” earthquakes took place in 1944 and 1946.

Notably, recent magnitude-7.1 earthquake occurred on or near the Nankai Trough. As a result, experts worry that the next tremor along the trough could be devastating.

### **When can the next megaquake along the Nankai Trough occur?**

In January 2022, Japan's Earthquake Research Committee said the next magnitude 8-9 megaquake along the trough has a roughly 70% probability of striking within the next 30 years. Tsunami waves of up to 98 feet may reach Japan's Pacific coasts within minutes after the quake.

A 2013 government report found that a major Nankai Trough earthquake could impact an area that covers about a third of Japan and where about half the country's population of more than 120 million people lives.

The economic damage due to the disaster could go up to \$1.50 trillion, or more than a third of Japan's annual gross domestic product.

### **But can earthquakes be predicted?**

No. An accurate prediction of an earthquake needs a precursory signal from within the earth, indicating a big quake is on the way. The signal must also occur only before large earthquakes so that it does not indicate every small movement within the earth's surface. Currently, there is no equipment to find such precursors.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: Indian Express

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