Google and US Congress

Why in news?

Google CEO Mr Pichai was questioned by members of the House Judiciary Committee about the way his tech firm run it business.

What were the major issues raised during the questioning?

- The hearing was on 'Transparency & Accountability: Examining Google and its Data Collection, Use, and Filtering Practices'.
- The 3 1/2-hour hearing raised questions upon the themes such as online privacy, data protection and the danger of digital monopolies.
- Pichai testified before Congress on Google Plus' data breaches, the controversial Chinese-censorship friendly search product known as 'Project Dragonfly' and perceived anti-conservative bias.
- **User Privacy**:
    1. Lawmakers questioned whether regular people know how much data Google can collect about them and how to stop being tracked.
    2. Privacy, of course, is also a huge issue for Facebook, after the Cambridge Analytica data mining scandal.
- **Political Bias**:

1. Lawmakers from both parties seem determined to re-examine whether Google rigs its search results to promote its own services and its own political agenda.
2. European regulators already have concluded Google manipulated its search engine to gain an unfair advantage over other online shopping sites in the lucrative e-commerce market

- Lawmakers on both sides peppered Mr. Pichai with questions about the possibility that Google is considering offering a censored search engine in China.

What are the various products of the Google's parent company Alphabet?

- Waymo, a self-driving technology development company is also part of the conglomerate.
- Google's Android operating system runs most of the world's smart phones.

- Gmail, YouTube, online ads and the Chrome web browser are the other products which are widely used.

How was the year of 2018 for Google?

- Google as major tech company faced bit internal and external issues.
- **YouTube -** It promoted conspiracies and inappropriate content in its trending section and was described as "one of the most powerful radicalizing instruments of the 21st century" for its abundance of divisive or misleading content.
- **Diversity -** Google's response to HR issues had been inadequate.
- Meanwhile, over the course of the year the company was hit with a spate of opposing lawsuits, which argue that it is either not doing enough or going too far in its push for diversity.
- **Regulators on the warpath -** European Union fined Google $5 billion for abusing the dominance of its Android mobile operating system.
- **Dragonfly -** Project Dragonfly is a plan to launch a censored search engine in China which would block search results for queries that the government deemed sensitive, like "human rights" and "student protest" and link users' searches to their personal phone number.
- The efforts raised alarm bells with lawmakers, human rights activists, and employees.
- **Employee walkouts -** On Nov. 1, more than 20,000 employees walked out of their offices around the worldin the wake of an explosive New York Times' report that detailed how Google shielded executives accused of sexual misconduct, either by keeping them on staff or allowing them amicable departures.
- **Privacy -** Two separate security bugs exposed the private profile information of more than 52 million Google Plus users, prompting the company to shut down the social network.
- Google also had a handful of other privacy and snafus, including unclear information on when it stores location data.
- Throughout all of Google's troubles, the most persistent narrative was the surge of employee activism.

Source: The Hindu, Businessline

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