

Japan to levy big fines with new app rules

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People walk with umbrellas in front of a news stand (C) during a rainy evening in Tokyo's Shibuya district. (Photo by Philip FONG / AFP)

TOKYO: Japan's cabinet approved Friday legislation that would slap major fines on tech giants like Google or Apple if they block access to third-party smartphone apps and payment systems.

Similar to the European Union's new Digital Markets Act, behaviour deemed anti-competitive could see operators fined up to 20 percent of their revenues in Japan.

Under the legislation set to be debated by lawmakers, they would also have to act fairly and make operating systems, browsers and search engines available for all.

"The legislation is urgently needed in order for Japan, the US, and Europe to keep pace with each other and ensure fair competition in the digital field," said government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi.

"Smartphones have become the foundation of people's daily lives and economic activities.

"For those specific softwares like applications stores that are particularly necessary for smartphone use, we will improve the competitive environment, encourage innovations, and realise consumer choice while also ensuring security," he said. - AFP