Everything you need to know about Facebook's week under scrutiny

Every week, Maddyness curates articles from other outlets on a topic that is driving the headlines. This week, we're talking about Facebook's outage, and why pressure for greater regulation of the social media giant is mounting.

Temps de lecture : minute

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On Monday, Facebook and its apps experienced an outage lasting around five hours. For a short period, nearly 2 billion people who use the apps daily had to adjust to life without these platforms.

The disappearance of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp for some meant distance from spending time online and a removal of the distraction. But for many, the absence of these platforms, which are also often used for doing business, scheduling medical appointments or contacting people in emergency, created added stress.

A non-profit organisation in Colombia, for example, which helps migrant women facing domestic violence over WhatsApp, said women in need were now unable to contact them. Meanwhile, across Africa where Facebook apps are crucial for vendors selling goods online, the disappearance of the service was a blow for business, so much so that a government spokesman in Tanzania had to urge citizens to "remain calm."

In any case, the disappearance of the services reminded us of how much

we rely on these platforms, meaning global setbacks when technical issues occur. Governments and regulators are now calling for greater oversight of these platforms, including the European Union, where policymakers are drafting new regulations to curb the company's influence in our lives.

Read more via _The New York Times_.

Whistleblower insists Facebook puts profit before people

It's not just the outage that has sparked critique of Facebook's power. This week, former employee turned Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen testified at Capitol Hill about the role she saw the company was playing in exposing young children to toxic content, undermining democracy and threatening national security.

After sharing evidence with regulators and the Wall Street Journal that Facebook was aware of the impact its apps were having in spreading misinformation and harm, she is now urging action from Congress.

In her testimony, Haugen said, "Yesterday, we saw Facebook get taken off the internet. I don't know why it went down but I know that for more than five hours, Facebook wasn't used to deepen divides, destabilise democracies, and make young girls and women feel bad about their bodies."

Read more via _CNN_.

Zuckerberg steps in to deny claims

Mark Zuckerberg has since denied claims that Facebook doesn't prioritise its users. In a blog posted to his personal Facebook page, Zuckerberg said

the claims don't "reflect the company we know."

Part of Haugen's testimony was that the company was aware that its platforms were being used to spread harmful information, but were unaccountable. She said that even though the company was aware of divisiveness, Facebook turned off safeguards designed to stop the spread of misinformation in the wake of the Capitol attack because it helped bring people back to the platform, and allowed the platform to sell more digital ads.

Zuckerberg insisted, "We make money from ads, and advertisers consistently tell us they don't want their ads next to harmful or angry content... The moral, business and product incentives all point in the opposite direction."

Read more via *Sky News*.

What's the future of Facebook?

Facebook's reputation has once again come under fire. Public confidence in the company is undermined, and experts are now weighing in on the conversation.

"Haugen has removed the last excuse Congress had for inaction. They now need to legislate in three areas: privacy, safety and competition," said one member of the Real Facebook Oversight Board.

Evan Greer, director of digital rights organisation Fight for the Future told The Guardian, "Facebook's surveillance capitalist business model is fundamentally incompatible with basic human rights and democracy. That's why we should push for harm reduction policies such as privacy legislation and antitrust enforcement that address the most immediate and urgent harms of big tech's monopoly power."

Read more via *The Guardian.*

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