

A day not to 'like' for Facebook

Some media outlets branded the outage as the biggest in Facebook's history

San Francisco, United States

Facebook grappled with challenges on two fronts Wednesday, an hours-long outage and intensified scrutiny from investigators reportedly probing data deals struck by the world's largest social network.

As the outage continued, gripes flooded rival Twitter as well as a comments section on downdetector.com, which tracks trouble accessing online pages.

"I have never seen Facebook down this long," one user lamented.

"And many other sites and apps are having issues too."

A Downdetector map late Wednesday showed Facebook service troubles persisting in parts of Australia, Asia, Europe, South America and North America.

"11 hours and still global wide outage continues," read another comment. "This is very bad. Seriously this is not something funny or worth the amusement to even troll about."

Some media outlets branded the outage as the biggest in Facebook's history.

The outage, of unknown origin, also affected Facebook-owned Instagram, as well as Messenger.

In some cases the apps could be accessed but would not load posts or handle messages.

'Not a DDoS attack'

The California firm which has more than two billion users



Facebook's "War Room," during a media demonstration in Menlo Park, California. (file)



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg speaks during the annual F8 summit at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center in San Jose, California (file)

acknowledged the outage after users noted on Twitter they could not access Facebook or had limited functionality.

"We're aware that some people are currently having trouble accessing the Facebook family of apps. We're working to resolve the issue as soon as possible," a Facebook statement said on Twitter.

A short time later, Facebook indicated the outage was not related to an attack aimed at overwhelming the network.

"We're focused on working to resolve the issue as soon as possible, but can confirm that the issue is not related to a DDoS attack," Facebook said.

Distributed denial of service cyber strikes involve hackers overwhelming websites with tidal waves of simultaneous requests, typically using armies of

computers infected with malicious code.

The social network said there was no update of the situation as evening arrived in California.

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FACEBOOK

Last November, a Facebook outage was attributed to a server problem, and a September disruption was said to be the result of "networking issues."

A grand jury subpoena

While the outage continued, *The New York Times* reported that US prosecutors have launched a criminal investigation into the social network's practice of sharing users' data with companies without letting its members know.

A grand jury in New York has subpoenaed information from at least two major smartphone makers about such arrangements with Facebook, according to the *Times*.

Regulators, investigators and elected officials in the US and elsewhere in the world have already been digging into the data

sharing practices of Facebook, which has more than two billion users.

The social network's handling of user data has been a flashpoint for controversy since it admitted last year that Cambridge Analytica, a political consultancy which did work for Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign, used an app that may have hijacked the private details of 87 million users.

"It has already been reported that there are ongoing federal investigations, including by the Department of Justice," a Facebook spokesman said in response to an AFP inquiry.

"As we've said before, we are cooperating with investigators and take those probes seriously. We've provided public testimony, answered questions, and

pledged that we will continue to do so."

Facebook has shared limited amounts of user data with smartphone makers and other outside partners to enable its services to work well on devices or with applications. Regulators, and now prosecutors, appear intent on determining whether this was done in ways that let users know what was happening and protected privacy.

The social network has announced a series of moves to tighten handling of data, including eliminating most of its data-sharing partnerships with outside companies.

The focus of the grand jury probe was not clear, nor was when it started, according to the *Times*, which cited unnamed sources.

Ringing the bell for gender equality



Officials during the event

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Bourse hosted a bell ringing ceremony in parallel with the celebration of International Women's Day, yesterday, as part of a move promoting gender equality and empowering women in the capital markets sector.

Narjes Farookh Jamal, Chief Operating Officer and Abeer AlSaad, Director of the Capital Markets Supervision at the Central Bank of Bahrain rang the market-opening bell in the presence of the Governor of the Central Bank of Bahrain Rasheed Mohammed Al-Maraj and Chief Executive Officer of Bahrain Bourse alongside other senior officials and female executives from listed companies.

Commenting on this occasion, Abeer AlSaad, Director – Capital Markets Supervision at

Central Bank of Bahrain stated, "This event contributes towards building an inclusive culture and gender balance at the workplace."

The CBB has also taken measures to provide an opportunity to women across hierarchy levels wherein 45 per cent of all employees at the CBB are women and 75pc of staff at the Capital Markets Supervision Directorate are women.

AlSaad also added, "Let us not lose sight of the fact that the Financial Sector contributes 16.7pc to the GDP, the second largest contributor to Bahrain's real GDP and that Bahrain has remained one of the leading financial market hubs in the region for more than 40 years. The growth story of Bahrain's financial sector reflects the capability, competency and determination of 35pc of Bahraini

YOU KNOW WHAT

Bell-ringing events aim to raise awareness on women's economic empowerment and the opportunities for the private sector to advance gender equality and sustainable development

women and their contribution cannot be undermined."

On her part, Narjes Farookh Jamal, Chief Operating Officer commented: "Women's economic empowerment is a key driver of sustainable develop-

ment as well as a key corporate sustainability issue. Locally, we are committed to the Equal Opportunities Committee initiative spearheaded by the Supreme Council for Women. At a more global level, we are committed to the Sustainability Stock Exchanges initiative, of which gender equality is a pivotal factor. Ideally, we would like to see more gender diversity at the C-suite level as well as the Board of Directors level within the capital markets."

Bahrain Bourse has joined 83 other global exchanges to mark the occasion over a week of bell-ringing activities for the first time since its establishment, in partnership with the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges (SSE) Initiative, the World Federation of Exchanges, IFC, UN Global Compact, UN Women.

UK watchdog puts Brexit war chest at £26.6 billion

London, United Kingdom

which he delivered earlier Wednesday.

"The forecast changes and policy decisions leave (Hammond) with £26.6 billion (1.2 per cent of GDP) of headroom against his fiscal mandate," the OBR said.

"This is up from £15.4 billion in October, as the fiscal costs of the temporary near-term cyclical weakness of the economy have been swamped by the fiscal gains from higher income tax and lower debt interest spending."

The figure represents the difference between the OBR's new budget deficit forecast and the government's own fiscal targets.

The money should help Britain offset an economic slowdown caused by uncertainty over how Brexit will be resolved.

British Prime Minister Theresa May stressed on Tuesday that parliament's approval of the withdrawal agreement she has reached with Brussels will deliver a fiscal "Brexit dividend". But lawmakers still rejected her deal, sending it to a second defeat since January.

May on Wednesday agreed to ask the 27 EU leaders for a postponement of the Brexit deadline.

