

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

It's decision day in Prince Harry's final privacy suit against British tabloids

LONDON, JULY 7: Prince Harry's longtime battle with the British tabloids reaches its climax Tuesday.

A judge in London's High Court will rule on the Duke of Sussex's privacy invasion lawsuit against the publisher of the Daily Mail, ending a trio of lawsuits that accused the news media of unlawfully snooping on his life. Newspapers

Harry and six others are seeking substantial damages in the celebrity-studded lawsuit where the legal costs for the 11-week trial have been estimated at about 40 million pounds (\$53.5 million). Harry, singer Elton John and actors Elizabeth Hurley and Sadie Frost are among those who accused Associated Newspapers Ltd. of tapping their phones, intercepting voicemails and obtaining personal information through deception.

The newspapers denied the allegations as "preposterous," insisting the roughly 50 articles at issue were based on lawful sources including friends, royal aides and publicists who offered information to reporters.

The verdict coincides with Harry's visit home to the UK, but the court case has been overshadowed by the question of whether he will bring his wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, and their two children, Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet, for a rare visit to their grandfather, King Charles III.

Harry has long criticised the news business

Harry's self-proclaimed mission to reform the press for creating what he called a toxic environment is much deeper than headlines that documented his party boy youth and romantic ups and downs. His emotional testimony in February drove that point home.

The prince has blamed the press for the death of his mother, Princess Diana, who was killed in a car crash in 1997 while being pursued by paparazzi in Paris, and for attacks on his wife that led the couple to leave royal life and move to the United States in 2020.

"They continue to come



after me, they have made my wife's life an absolute misery," he said as he choked back tears in the witness box. News

The phone hacking scandal that began in the 1990s and continued for more than a decade gave Harry the opportunity to break with royal family tradition and take his case to court. Three years ago, he became the first senior royal to testify in court in over a century.

Harry won a judgment in 2023 that condemned the publishers of the Daily Mirror for "widespread and habitual" phone hacking. Last year, Rupert Murdoch's flagship UK tabloid, The Sun, made an unprecedented apology for intruding on his life for years, and agreed to pay substantial damages to settle his privacy invasion lawsuit.

The case against the Daily Mail

Attorney David Sherborne said the Daily Mail and its sister publication, Mail on Sunday, used its journalists, freelance reporters and private eyes for "clear, systematic and sustained use of unlawful information gathering" to snoop on his clients.

He connected payments to detectives with dates of articles in question to try to show, for example, how journalists tracked down information about Harry's then-girlfriend, Chelsy Davy, and her travel plans.

Harry testified at the start of the trial in January that press intrusions left him "paranoid beyond belief," strained his relationships and took a toll on his mental health.

Hurley accused the Mail of

putting microphones outside her windows and stealing her medical records among "other monstrous, staggering things."

"It is like there is someone peeping into your life and into your home," the model and actor testified. "My private life had been violated by violent intruders - that there had been sinister thieves in my home all along and that I had been living with them completely unaware."

Other claimants in the case are anti-racism activist Doreen Lawrence, former politician Simon Hughes and John's husband, David Furnish.

Journalists were lining up to testify in defense

Defense lawyer Antony White said the case relied on conjecture and inferences when the more likely source of information was "ordinary, legitimate journalism."

White said Harry was "inclined to see unlawful evidence gathering, in particular voicemail interception, everywhere," despite a lack of evidence.

The Mail trial has played out differently than the Mirror case, with White saying that journalists were "lining up" to defend their work in court.

Some reporters pointed to official mouthpieces, such as a palace spokesperson, and others named their sources to dispute Harry's assertion that his "social circles were not leaky."

"They were not all tight-lipped," Katie Nicholl, a former Mail on Sunday editor, said about Harry's associates. "I had very good sources in the inner circle."

Detective's testimony could make or break case

One issue at the trial is whether the claimants should have been allowed to bring allegations dating to the 1990s, long after a six-year limit expired.

They avoided the deadline by saying they were unaware of the phone hacking until private investigator Gavin Burrows came forward in 2021 to "do the right thing" and help those he had targeted.

But Burrows, who once apologized to Harry in a BBC documentary for ruthlessly targeting him for tabloids in his teen years, testified at trial that he never worked for the Mail. He said a statement attributed to him was fabricated by the claimants' legal team and his signature was forged.

Justice Matthew Nicklin repeatedly asked Sherborne what would happen to the case if he rejected Burrows' original statement.

Sherborne said a wealth of other evidence implicated the newspapers, but White said the case collapsed with Burrows' testimony contradicting the witness statement he disavowed.

Burrows denied switching sides to get revenge after a disagreement with Harry's legal team.

Possible reunion with royal family overshadows the case

The judgment, which will be issued remotely without a hearing, comes as Harry is in London for charity events.

Harry had been expected to bring his children to visit Charles, who is being treated for an undisclosed type of cancer, for the first time in years.

Harry has been trying to repair a rift since he moved to America and aired family grievances in the scorching 2023 memoir, "Spare," and a Netflix series.

But a family reunion is up in the air as Harry haggles over security arrangements and accommodations. A government committee refused to authorize taxpayer-funded security, which was the source of disputes - including litigation - that Harry has repeatedly lost. (AP)

Protesters in Imphal demand special Assembly session, scrapping of SoO pact



IMPHAL, JUL 7: Hundreds of demonstrators on Tuesday staged a protest here demanding that the Manipur government convene a special session of the Assembly to discuss mea-

sures for restoring peace and abrogate the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with Kuki militant groups.

The protest was jointly organised by the Naga People's Union Imphal, Imphal Naga

Business Association, Imagi Meira and several other organisations, with participation from members of the Naga and Meitei communities.

Addressing the gathering,

Kshetrimayum Shanti, a women leader from Khwairamband market, said the joint participation of hill and valley communities in the protest was a positive step towards restoring peace.

Trump expected to 'gift' potential F-35 sale to Turkey: Report

ANKARA/WASHINGTON, JULY 7: Despite opposition from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US president Donald Trump is expected to allow potential sale of F-35 stealth fighter jet programme to Turkey during a visit to Ankara, a media report said.

Trump is likely to tell Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he is prepared to help restore Turkey's access to the F-35 stealth fighter jet programme, reversing a ban imposed during Trump's first term over concerns that Russia could gain insight into the aircraft's advanced technology, the New York Post reported.

Netanyahu has cited an argument of "upsetting the power balance" in the region if the sale goes ahead. Trump, who is set to arrive in Ankara this week for a NATO summit, has said he was preparing a gift that would make Erdogan "very happy," though details of any announcement remain uncertain.

Four senior U.S. administration officials said Washington had been working be-



hind the scenes for weeks to resolve the dispute that has kept Turkey out of the programme since 2019. Officials said Trump was expected to signal his intention to return Turkey to the F-35 programme, although the timing and legal pathway remain unclear, the New York Post reported.

The move could face resistance in Congress, which passed legislation in 2020 restricting the sale of F-35 jets to Turkey unless the administration determines that Ankara no longer possesses Russia's S-400 air defence systems.

Turkey was removed from the F-35 programme after purchasing the Russian-made S-400 system, with

Washington warning that the radar technology could allow Moscow to collect information on the fighter jet's stealth capabilities and undermine NATO security.

A senior US official said one possible solution under discussion was transferring Turkey's S-400 systems to a third party, although another official said no final arrangement had been reached. Other options reportedly include rendering the systems unusable by removing critical components, the New York Post reported.

Turkey has pushed for years to rejoin the F-35 programme but has refused to abandon the Russian air defence systems, which it purchased despite objections

from its NATO allies.

Trump has maintained a close relationship with Erdogan and has previously expressed dissatisfaction with Turkey's removal from the programme. Vice President JD Vance recently indicated that Trump had directed officials to explore ways to resolve the dispute.

The F-35 issue has remained one of the most serious points of tension between Washington and Ankara. In 2019, the U.S. administration said the Russian system could not coexist with the F-35 programme because it could be used to gather intelligence on the aircraft's capabilities.

"Turkey has been a longstanding and trusted partner and NATO ally for over 65 years, but accepting the S-400 undermines the commitments all NATO allies made to each other to move away from Russian systems," the White House said at the time.

If Turkey gets the access of F-35 programme it would mark a reversal in U.S. policy which ultimately could reshape defence ties between the two NATO members. (UNI)

UK sanctions Russian labs and people over chemical weapons used on Navalny, Skripal

LONDON, JUL 7: Britain imposed sanctions Monday on nine Russian people and entities it said developed chemical weapons used to kill opposition leader Alexei Navalny and attack a former spy in England.

The sanctions came the same day the UK criticised Russia's "unsafe" approach to Royal Navy vessels in the Arctic.

The Foreign Office announced sanctions against seven people and two scientific institutes. It says they were involved in creating the epibatidine toxin used to poison Navalny in an Arctic penal colony in 2024 and the Novichok nerve agent used in a 2018 attack in the English city of Salisbury targeting former Russian intelligence officer Sergei Skripal.



The attack left Skripal and his daughter seriously ill and a local woman, Dawn Sturgess, dead.

Britain sanctioned the Russian state scientific research institute SC Signal and GNIII VM, the State Scientific Research and Testing Institute for Military Medicine, along with several se-

nior officials and scientists.

Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said that "Russia's repeated use of chemical weapons is a sickening violation of international law and a direct threat to global security." Also on Monday, Britain's defence ministry released images of UK F-35 fighter jets intercepting a

Russian Bear-F maritime patrol aircraft that it said approached a British carrier strike group in the Norwegian Sea. HMS Prince of Wales and other British vessels are in the Arctic as part of NATO operations.

The ministry said that on Thursday, "the Bear-F passed at low altitude and unnecessarily close to HMS Prince of Wales and dropped a large number of sonobuoys in close proximity to the carrier." The monitoring devices float and use sonar to detect submarines and other vessels. "This activity was unsafe and unprofessional. The Russian aircraft was intercepted and escorted by two UK F-35 jets from HMS Prince of Wales until it left the area," the defence ministry said in a statement. (AP)

Landslides in Bangladesh kill at least 8 Rohingya refugees

DHAKA, JULY 7: Landslides triggered by heavy monsoon rains in eastern Bangladesh killed at least eight Rohingya refugees, including five children, officials said Tuesday.

Dollar Tripura, a Fire Service and Civil Defense official in Cox's Bazar District, told The Associated Press that rescuers recovered seven bodies while an eighth body was found by refugees after several hills collapsed from

late Sunday to Monday morning. He said another two children were found with injuries.

Officials said continuous rain and hillside torrents loosened soil on slopes, causing makeshift houses to collapse.

Tripura said the landslides affected at least four locations across the camps, burying shelters under mud and debris while residents were

asleep. "All the bodies have been handed over to the families through local refugee leaders and police," he said.

Authorities said they were relocating the refugees from at-risk hill areas, and some 1,000 people have already been relocated.

The weather office in the capital, Dhaka, has forecast more rain in the coming days. According to the UNHCR,

36 refugees died and at least 86 were injured in similar landslides at refugee camps between 2021 and 2026.

More than 1 million refugees who fled neighboring Myanmar live in camps in Bangladesh.

Renewed fighting in Myanmar's Rakhine state between the military government and the Arakan Army has raised concern of a fresh influx of Rohingya refugees across the border. (AP)

Explosions rock Damascus, wounding 4, as French President Macron visits Syria

DAMASCUS, JULY 7: Explosions rocked Damascus on Tuesday as France's president met with his Syrian counterpart in a landmark visit, wounding at least four people according to Syrian state media.

Emmanuel Macron had entered the presidential palace to meet Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa when the explosions happened near the Four Seasons Hotel. Syrian authorities did not immediately comment on the incident.

Syrian media reported that Macron was staying at the Four Seasons. The French president's office said he was safe and that his meeting with al-Sharaa was continuing. Macron is the first major Western leader to visit Syria since al-Sharaa came to power and his visit comes before he heads to a NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey.

Macron played a major role in pushing Europe and the United States to drop most sanctions on Syria. He arrived in the country Monday night with an economic delegation, and is scheduled to sign memorandums of understanding with his counterpart as the battered coun-



try tries to lure investors to help it rebuild after 14 years of war.

State television, citing an unnamed security official, reported that the two blasts in the heart of the capital were caused by explosive devices, one placed in a garbage bin and the other in a parked car. The report added that four people were wounded including several police officers, and no deaths were immediately reported. An investigation is currently taking place at the scene of the attack.

A large plume of smoke could be seen from the site. The area is on a busy street in Damascus and is near the

headquarters of the Tourism Ministry and the Damascus National Museum.

Footage widely circulated on social media showed a van and a motorcycle on fire and blood stains on the street.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. No group immediately claimed responsibility.

The incident comes days after an explosive device was detonated in a cafe near the Justice Palace in Damascus, killing at least 10 people and wounding more than 20.

The explosions are a blow for al-Sharaa, who came to power after leading an insurgency that ousted Bashar As-

sad in 2024.

He has since pushed to assert full control and bring stability in war-torn Syria, appeal to minorities skeptical of his Islamist-led rule, and win the support of Western governments who were skeptical of his past leadership of the former al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group. His government has promised political and economic reform after decades of autocratic rule. Political Debate Forum

While Syria's new rulers have wrestled with violence involving different groups in the country as they work to assert control, the capital has largely been peaceful during the turbulent period.

The conflict in Syria killed nearly half a million people and displaced millions. Syria's infrastructure lies in ruins, and while other nations and businesses have made large investment pledges, the country still needs hundreds of billions of dollars to rebuild and lift millions out of poverty.

Before arriving at the presidential palace, Macron met with members of Syrian civil society, though his office did not give details on who. (AP)