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# Professor Yunus, the crown, and diplomatic impropriety!

Sadrul Amin 16 June, 2025, 00:00

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PROFESSOR Muhammad Yunus's recent visit to London, marked by the distinguished honour of receiving the King Charles III Harmony Award 2025, was a moment of significance—not only for him personally but also for the Bangladeshis and the wider global community who value peace, equity, and sustainable development. It also, perhaps unintentionally, served as a litmus test for political etiquette — one in which prime minister Keir Starmer's office remained noticeably unresponsive.

As I followed coverage of the visit, I was surprised to note the absence of any scheduled meeting between professor Yunus and the prime minister. This seemed diplomatically anomalous, especially given the symbolic resonance of an award personally bestowed by the British monarch. To put my concern into perspective, I posed the following question to Microsoft Copilot AI: 'Don't you think professor Yunus's London visit, particularly in light of receiving the King Charles III Harmony Award 2025, merited a formal courtesy of PM Starmer to have a meeting with professor Yunus?'

The AI's response mirrored my own sentiments and pride as a Bangladeshi: 'It certainly raises eyebrows, doesn't it? In diplomatic circles, when a globally respected figure like professor Yunus—who's not only a Nobel Peace Prize laureate but also being honoured by the monarch — visits the UK, a courtesy meeting with the prime minister would typically be seen as both symbolic and respectful. These meetings often underscore shared values and mutual respect, especially when the visitor is engaged in issues like peacebuilding, sustainability, and transnational financial justice.'

It is needless to say that such meetings transcend ceremonial niceties — they reflect diplomatic values and affirm mutual recognition. When the Crown itself honours a Nobel Laureate whose work embodies principles Britain openly advocates, the absence of political acknowledgement becomes a conspicuous lapse, more than a logistical oversight. It gives a skewed signal — one probably induced by the apparent apathy of some particular quarters.

The prime minister's failure to squeeze out even a modicum of time for professor Yunus during his London visit is tantamount to not only politically biased incivility but also a troubling display of disrespect toward the British monarch. Such an omission, whether by design or indifference, cannot be brushed aside as a matter of any scheduling constraint. Diplomatic tradition prizes symbolic engagement, precisely because it reflects civility, courtesy, and a commitment to diplomatic propriety.

This is not just about professor Yunus as an individual. It is about how a country recognises international icons — especially when partisan considerations, seemingly shaped by vested interests, appear to override the opportunity to demonstrate common courtesy and normal decorum of diplomacy. If a guest honoured by the Crown can be disregarded without justification, one must ask: what does that say about the long-established political tradition of the country and the

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force behind guiding such decisions?

Professor Yunus's London visit proved to be more than a ceremonial formality — it offered Britain an opportunity to demonstrate its values, reaffirm its commitment to moral diplomacy, and strengthen goodwill with a close partner nation. Despite the good will and generosity of the King, that this opportunity was instead met with the apathy of some responsible quarters was more than an oversight — it was a telling omission — one the world noticed and would remember!

*Dr Sadrul Amin teaches at the University of Dhaka.*

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