

We are so blessed to be living in inclusive Britain, says chief rabbi

Kaya Burgess
Religious Affairs Correspondent

One of the key figures at the King's coronation will have to arrive at Westminster Abbey on foot. He will speak, but there will be no microphone to capture it. And he held legal discussions with a court before attending.

On Saturday, the world will witness the very rare sight of "a chief rabbi in a church on a Shabbat morning", Sir Ephraim Mirvis has said. He has praised coronation planners for making a host of special arrangements to allow an orthodox Jew to attend a Christian place of worship and take part in a procession on the Jewish sabbath — something that would normally be unthinkable.

"[There has been] a lot of sensitivity, a lot of goodwill and a huge amount of warmth," Rabbi Mirvis said, highlighting the "endless ways in which the palace is being amenable and fully inclusive".

"I think it's a marvellous reflection of 21st century Britain," he added. "We are so blessed to be living in this era of inclusivity and mutual respect."

The coronations of 1953, 1937 and 1911 were midweek ceremonies. The King, who has developed a personal rapport with Rabbi Mirvis, was keen for him to play a role in this year's coronation, with plans for faith leaders to form a procession and deliver a joint greeting, but the ceremony falling on a Saturday threw the rabbi's involvement into doubt.

Religious Jews are forbidden from performing any type of work on the Sabbath, which begins at 8.11pm on Friday and lasts until 9.32pm on Saturday.

They must not use vehicular transport and should not use electronic devices, in a form of "digital detox", Rabbi Mirvis explained.

Orthodox Jews are also not meant to enter Christian churches or

Rabbi Mirvis is staying at the palace tonight

take part in Christian ceremonies, particularly on the Sabbath. The King and Queen have extended a "terrific" invitation for Rabbi Mirvis and his wife, Valerie, to stay at St James's Palace on Friday night, he said, which will allow them to travel to the abbey on foot on Saturday morning.

They will follow the same route trodden by Chief Rabbi Hermann Adler in 1902 to witness Edward VII's crowning, the last time a coronation fell on a Saturday.

"This gesture of hospitality is wonderful, which we appreciate enormously," he said. "And to look after us they're bringing in a kosher caterer." The chief rabbi will dine on coronation chicken on Friday night, he said, adding that the palace had even offered a "horse and carriage" to take him to the abbey.

Rabbi Mirvis will join Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu and Muslim representatives to give a joint greeting to the King at the end of the coronation. "There won't be a microphone in front of me," he said, adding that it showed "enormous sensitivity" from coronation planners to honour the bar on using electronic devices during the Sabbath. "That's not something we needed to point out, I was told that I shouldn't worry and that it will all be looked after."

Lambeth Palace has stressed that while the greeting from non-Christian faith leaders is part of the overall coronation ceremony, it is not part of the Christian coronation ritual, thus allowing the chief rabbi to participate.

The Beth Din rabbinical court holds that a chief rabbi can attend a Christian church if it is at the personal invitation of the sovereign. Rabbi Mirvis held discussions with judges at the court and said: "When the monarch issues an invitation then it is correct and proper that we respond positively."

A bit of pomp is what this drab world needs, Thunderer, page 26
A celebration of our diverse nation, leading article, page 29

Patten: China doesn't give two hoots about Britain

Steven Swinford Political Editor

China's decision to send a senior official accused of "destroying" democracy in Hong Kong to the coronation shows that it does not "give a toss" about Britain, the last governor of the former British territory has said.

Han Zheng, who has been blamed for overseeing a crackdown on freedom in Hong Kong, was recently appointed as President Xi's deputy. James Cleverly, the foreign secretary, who will meet Han, is expected to raise issues including Hong Kong and human rights abuses in Xinjiang province.

Lord Patten of Barnes said that the decision to send Han showed that China did not give "two hoots" about Britain. He told *World at One* on BBC Radio 4: "It does give an indication of what the Chinese Communist Party actually thinks about us because, while he may or may not be a significant figure in Xi Jinping's court, he was actually the guy responsible for policy on Hong Kong... it's a stick in the eye for 140,000 or more Hongkongers who are in exile here."

He added: "I think it's an indication of the fact that, however much you grovel to China, however much you try to give them face [respect], they don't give a toss... they could have sent lots of other people. There are, after all, 1.4 billion of them and they chose to send the guy who's responsible for breaking their word about Hong Kong." Patten added: "If it wasn't deliberate, then it shows how casually they actually treat us."

"So, however hard we try to lean over backwards, horizontally sometimes, to accommodate their own political narrative, I don't think they really give two hoots about us."

Han led Hong Kong affairs for Beijing between 2018 and March this year, during which time it imposed a national security law after mass protests, stifling opposition and criminalising dissent.

The UK says China remains in breach of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, under which it has a duty to uphold Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms. Hong Kong was handed over from the UK to China in 1997 with a promise by Beijing to keep western-style liberties under a "one country, two systems" framework.



The Prince of Wales tries to pull a pint of Kingmaker, brewed especially for his father's coronation, before the princess sipped some cider. They travelled to the Dog and Duck pub in Soho on the Elizabeth Line from Acton and discussed family preparations for the weekend of celebrations. Kate said Prince George was looking forward excitedly to serving as a page of honour



Off with his head! Prince pulls a pint

Jumping on the Elizabeth Line to go to work, popping into the pub for a quick pint — just another day for the Prince and Princess of Wales (Valentine Low writes).

Both ventures were the

couple's way to thank the people who will be working over the weekend as part of the coronation festivities.

Their trip on the Tube, which began at Acton, was the first time they had taken the underground to an official

engagement. They were trying to focus on the Transport for London (TfL) workers on duty over the weekend but conversation turned inevitably to the coronation.

Kate agreed it was going to be a "very busy time". She added: "I still feel like we're trying to get ducks in a row."

After being handed their Oyster cards the couple were welcomed to the station by Andy Lord, the TfL commissioner,

before meeting workers including Carinne Spinola, a train driver.

"It's nice to meet a female train driver," Kate said. "Obviously a profession women are keen on getting into."

The Elizabeth Line was opened by the late Queen, after whom it was named, almost a year ago on May 17, 2022.



the couple travel on the Tube "occasionally".

During the short journey William and Kate were accompanied by Francis Bourgeois, a trainpotter who was invited to act as an observer by Kensington Palace. Royal aides said it was hoped Bourgeois, 22, could bring the experience to his "younger audience" on Instagram.

They left the Tube at Tottenham Court Road and snuck into the Dog

and Duck in Soho, which dates back to 1734.

Kate said her three children were immersed in preparations for the weekend. "The children are having their coronation celebration at school today," she said. She added that Prince George was excited to be a page of honour but was "more relaxed" after a few rehearsals.

William seemed particularly relaxed as he settled with a pint of cider. He began to recall a

night out with Wayne Rooney, the former England striker, before remembering journalists were present. "A couple of vodkas and we'll be all right," he said, smiling.

William tried to pull a pint of Kingmaker Pale Ale, specially brewed for Nicholson's, the chain that owns the pub.

"Expertly done," Chris Watts, the area manager, said. "Not really," William replied. "I'm not too bad at drinking pints but pulling pints..."

The flowers plucked for a personal touch

Valentine Low, Tom Saunders

They are seasonal, they are serious, and they come from every corner of the United Kingdom, from farms and cutting gardens to allotments and even a windswept croft on the Isle of Skye.

Above all, though, the flowers that will adorn Westminster Abbey for the coronation will be a reflection of "the real characters of the King and Queen", according to Shane Connolly, the floral designer. Connolly, who did the flowers for the weddings of Charles and Camilla, and William and Kate, said his aim was to make them "incredibly personal" to the King and Queen.

The flowers are a gift from Flowers from the Farm, a group of artisan growers of cut flowers, and foliage from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) will decorate the High Altar.

The flowers have been grown in every nation of the UK, from the Hebrides to the coast of Cornwall and from the mountains of Snowdonia to Tobermore in Northern Ireland.

Nicola Macbridge, 60, grew the broom that will be seen at the abbey at her small farm on Skye, Meadowsweet Croft, where she spends much of the year being buffeted by gale-force winds.

She said: "If you're going to grow flowers on a Hebridean island, you do need to be able to embrace everything this beautiful island can throw at you."

Connolly, 60, said: "The flowers are one of the things that can reflect the real characters of the King and Queen, simple garden flowers that are British



Shane Connolly has arranged the flowers to adorn Westminster Abbey

seasonal, like they might cut themselves from their own gardens. That was my aim, to make it all incredibly personal to them."

Buckingham Palace has also announced the five artists commissioned to capture the weekend. Three alumni of the Royal Drawing School — Fraser Scarfe, Phoebe Stannard and Gideon Summerfield — will do sketches along the processional route and Eileen Hogan will paint the service. Afterwards Peter Kuhfeld will paint the King's state portrait and Paul Benney the Queen's.

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Long to rain over us: risk of flypast washout

Kieran Gair

The coronation flypast could be cancelled tomorrow amid fears that a sudden downpour coupled with cloudy skies may derail the spectacle.

It is due to take place after the ceremony at Westminster Abbey, at about 2.30pm, when members of the royal family will gather on the Buckingham Palace balcony to watch a stream of aircraft pass over The Mall and Green Park.

Coronation day is expected to be grey and wet with outbreaks of heavy rain across England and Wales, the Met Office said. Computer modelling predicts that cloud could be as low as 200 metres.

The RAF and Ministry of Defence will make a decision on cancelling the flypast an hour or two before the event is due.

The six-minute display is expected to include more than 60 aircraft from the three services, among them the Red Arrows, the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, and a 16-strong helicopter formation.

Depending on the weather, parts or all of the flypast could be modified or cancelled. The flypast that was meant to have concluded the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant last year was also called off because of poor visibility.

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Belize may be next to ditch monarchy

Seren Hughes, Peter Chappell

Belize's prime minister has said that it is "quite likely" his country will be the next Commonwealth state to become a republic while it was revealed that the coronation has accelerated Jamaican plans for a referendum on whether to keep the King as its head of state.

Speaking in the capital Belmopan, Johnny Briceño said "the chance is quite high" Belize could leave the Commonwealth realm.

A constitutional commission created last year is considering whether Belize should become a republic. Briceño said that he will put the recommendations to a referendum, but did not rule out removing the crown through a parliamentary vote in the wake of the commission's report, due next year.

He indicated that Belize would remain within the Commonwealth of Nations, which consists of 56 states.

Marlene Malahoo Forte, Jamaica's minister for legal and constitutional affairs, said that the King was as "foreign as it gets" to the Caribbean country. She told Sky News she hoped to bring forward a bill this month to remove the monarch from the constitution. Many Jamaicans had "warm affection" for the late Queen "but they do not identify with King Charles."

According to a poll, citizens in six of the 15 Commonwealth realms would vote to become republics.