

Last word

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Eastern delights

LAST year there was a Spanish theme to Lovells' annual press party as the London law firm celebrated the opening of its new Madrid office.

This year there was a distinct Middle Eastern tang to the decor and refreshments following the very successful start to Lovells' latest overseas venture.

The firm's Dubai office, described as the missing link in Lovells' global representation, has only been in business since the beginning of May but has already worked on 12 transactions with a combined value of \$12bn.

For some reason, a UAE posting is proving very popular among Brummie staff, with three of the five Dubai partners hailing from Britain's second city.

What is wrong with Birmingham, mused Shibeer Ahmed, who heads the firm's global Islamic finance practice and is one of those based in Dubai.

Could it be anything to do with Dubai's endless sunshine, blue skies, pristine beaches, warm seas, designer stores or stunning skyline?

Greek brinkmanship?

GREECE is blocking a unanimous agreement in the European Union council of ministers over the exclusion of inland waterways from the proposed regulation on passenger liability, we hear.

All the other 26 EU governments believe inland waterways should be kept out of the scope of the law, which seeks to apply the Athens convention on domestic routes in Europe.

Why is Athens holding out? Could it be for reasons of principle? Or could it be that clever Greek diplomats will give way once they have something in return from the EU presidency?

Costa 'clutching at straws'

GIVEN the overwhelming opinion of ministers to leave inland waterways out of the regulation, European parliament transport committee chairman Paolo Costa is facing an uphill battle.

Brussels watchers will recall Mr Costa, parliamentary rapporteur, calling the barge industry irresponsible and fighting tooth and nail to keep the industry covered by the proposed regulation.

Twice he has challenged voting in the parliament which seemed to strip his regulation of the extended scope, in agreement for once with the council of ministers.

Does he have any chance of success? Our mole with the ministers says he is "clutching at straws".*

Port promotion

ITALY'S two great shipping capitals, Genoa and Naples, have something to celebrate following a 0-0 draw that saw both cities' football teams promoted to the top flight.

The result means that the Genoa derby is restored in all its glory. Genoa may be Italy's first football club but they last won the championship in 1924 and rivals Sampdoria, from the area down by the Sanpierrez docks, have been in Serie A for four years.

Returning Napoli to the pantheon also restores one of Italy's great stadium experiences to prime time, and ensures that those shipping types who are lifelong 'Genoani', including Medov's Giulio Schenone and Roberto Giorgi of V.Ships — reliably understood to be at Sunday's game, are unable to lord it over their southern colleagues, at least until they play again next season.

Genoa and Naples were not the only port cities filled with cheering hordes over the weekend. Fans in La Spezia were, if anything, even more overjoyed after the local team upset second division champions Juventus in Turin.

The 'Spezzini' are in danger of going down one season after they came up, but if they can beat Juve surely salvation through the play-offs is not beyond them.

The crew of Artemis Ocean Racing celebrate a valiant sixth place in the Round Britain Race after 10 days, 10 hours and 53 minutes of racing clockwise around the UK in challenging conditions. Artemis is one of the older of the 11 boats that took part.

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