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Queen shuns Dubai ruler

Royal cold shoulder for racing sheikh who kidnapped his own daughters

Valentine Low, David Brown
Catherine Philp, Martyn Ziegler

The Queen is to distance herself from the billionaire ruler of Dubai after a court ruled that he had kidnapped two of his daughters, *The Times* has learnt.

The Queen and Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum have had a close relationship for decades through their shared love of racing and he has been a guest in the royal box at Ascot.

However, she is now expected to refuse to be photographed with him in public after a judge ruled that he had kidnapped his daughters Shamsa and

Latifa and had them brought back to Dubai. The decision to shun the sheikh could have an impact on Britain's relationship with the United Arab Emirates, a key ally.

Sheikh Mohammed, 70, was also said to have caused Princess Haya bint al-Hussein, then his wife, to be in fear of her life after discovering her affair with a bodyguard. She fled last year to her £75 million home in west London with their two children, Jalila, now 12, and Zayed, seven. The couple have since divorced.

The claims about their lives were disclosed after the Supreme Court ruled

that a judgment in their custody battle for the children could be made public.

As well as being the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed is vice-president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates, a federation of seven semi-autonomous states.

In a sign of British nervousness over the fallout, Downing Street said yesterday that Boris Johnson had spoken to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, the UAE's de-facto leader, about strengthening bilateral ties. Dominic Raab, the foreign secretary, who is in Saudi Arabia, said: "We'll look at [the judgment] very carefully before jumping

to any conclusions." The government has been seeking to bolster its relationship with the Gulf after Britain's departure from the European Union.

The Queen is understood to want to avoid being dragged into the dispute between the sheikh and Princess Haya. She has been photographed with Sheikh Mohammed and has for a decade received annual gifts of horses from him and also uses his stud services.

She will now make sure that she is not in a situation where she is likely to be photographed with him or the princess, *The Times* understands. If the Queen
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The Queen presenting the Gold Cup to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum. Despite their love of racing, she is expected now to refuse to be photographed with him

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Friendship founded on a mutual love of winning

Valentine Low
Martyn Ziegler Chief Sports Reporter

In 1994, a couple of years after Godolphin had its first winner, Sheikh Mohammed took on a new two-year-old after the death of its trainer. Lammtarra was unwell throughout the winter, but the sheikh always believed he could win the Derby and, come the day of the race in June 1995, was deep in concentration. "He wouldn't talk to anyone in the paddock except the Queen," Simon Crisford, then racing manager for Godolphin told the *Racing Post*. Lammtarra, of course, went on to win the race.

The anecdote says much about the relationship between the Queen and the sheikh. John Warren, her racing manager, described the sheikh in 2010 as a "friend" of the Queen whom she had seen "on a fairly regular basis" for 20 years. As one racing source put it, "people who love horses have a language which they speak to one another. It is different to any other kind of relationship."

But they share more than just a love of racing — over the years the sheikh has given the Queen many horses. It began in 2009 when the sheikh wanted to buy the Queen's Highland Glen. Knowing the horse could be temperamental, and therefore a risky purchase, the Queen gave Sheikh Mohammed the horse instead.

In return he gave her four yearlings, one of which, Carlton House, finished third in the Derby in 2011. This was good for the Queen but also for the sheikh. He believes it is good for the industry if she is seen to be a successful owner. Since then he has given her four yearlings annually.

The racing world is now watching to

see whether the Queen continues to accept the sheikh's gifts and whether she carries on using the Darley thoroughbred breeding arm of his operation.

Last year she sent four mares to Dubawi, the sheikh's top stallion. Dubawi's advertised stud fee that season was £250,000 per mare, but racing observers believe it is unlikely that the Queen paid that much.

Sheikh Mohammed is the single figure who props up British racing, and the industry is anxiously looking to see what happens next. Godolphin's biggest base is in Newmarket, where the Sheikh owns large swathes of property, including studs and training stables. Two trainers, Saeed Bin Suroor and Charlie Appleby, work solely for the Dubai operation. Godolphin also has several horses with other trainers as well as bases in Dubai, Australia, France, Ireland, Japan and the United States.

In Britain last year 233 horses raced in Godolphin's blue silks, winning 157 races and about £3.3 million in prize money. Since many horses do not make the racecourse, that suggests Godolphin has in excess of 300 horses in training in Britain alone, plus many more at its stud farms.

Horses owned by Godolphin have won most of the world's biggest races. It has long been one of the biggest spenders at thoroughbred sales around the world. It first made its intentions clear when spending a record \$10.2 million on Snaafi Dancer, a yearling that never made it to a racecourse owing to poor showings on the gallops, at the Keeneland Sales in America in 1983.

A keen competitor in endurance racing, where horses compete over distances of up to 100 miles, in 2009 the

sheikh was banned for six months by the International Equestrian Federation following two positive dope tests on his horses.

In 2013, 15 horses trained for Sheikh Mohammed by Mahmood al-Zarooni in Newmarket tested positive to steroids and the trainer was banned for eight years. The sheikh said he was "appalled and angered" by Mr Zarooni's actions.



The sheikh, Princess Haya and Princess Shamsa, below left, enjoy life with horses



Ruler could 'walk off in a huff' if he feels slighted

Continued from page 1

were to shun the sheikh completely, it could have serious consequences. Dubai is a key intelligence and defence partner in the Gulf. A racing source said that if the ruler were to feel slighted he could well "walk off in a huff".

The UAE is one of the biggest markets for British arms manufacturers, buying £7.3 billion of weapons and dual-use equipment between 2008 and 2017. It has repeatedly pressured the British government over unflattering depictions of its royal family in the media.

The publication of the ruling by Sir Andrew McFarlane, president of the family division of the High Court, has also prompted Cambridgeshire police to review for the second time its inquiry into the kidnapping of Princess Shamsa.

Sheikh Mohammed was accused in court of ordering his agents to abduct her in Cambridge after she escaped in 2000 from the family's country estate. The judge ruled that he had orchestrated her abduction and forced captivity. He also found that the sheikh was behind the kidnapping of Princess Latifa, 34, who was taken from a yacht in the Indian Ocean in 2018.

Robin Cook, the foreign secretary at

the time of Shamsa's capture, asked to be kept informed of the case. The officer leading the investigation was denied permission by the Crown Prosecution Service to travel to Dubai to interview witnesses and the inquiry was dropped.

Detective Chief Inspector David Beck said that the truth was being suppressed to save official "embarrassment". He added that he had been prevented from reviewing the police files in the case despite being required to give evidence in the High Court.

"They said in the statements in court they quoted 'significant sensitivities' and to me 'significant sensitivities' means someone is going to get embarrassed. Well, personal embarrassment is not a reason for withholding the truth about the evidence," he said.

The British Horseracing Authority has been urged to reassess its permission for Sheikh Mohammed to operate as a racehorse owner in the United Kingdom after the ruling found he had "not been open and honest with the court". The authority declined to comment.

Jo Stevens, a Labour MP who sits on the digital, culture, media and sport committee, said that the authority should investigate the case.

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