
IRAQ TO HOST FIRST INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

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BAGHDAD: Iraq is to host a West Asia Football Federation (WAFF) championship in the southern city of Basra in November, the first international tournament to be staged in the country since the 1990s.

Iraqi authorities late on Sunday hailed WAFF's invitation to host the tournament, following the decision in March of world football's governing body FIFA to lift a three-decade ban on Iraq hosting international football.

Iraq is now "eager to organise a major footballing event and to show that it is ready at all levels", Iraqi Football Association spokesman Kamel Zaghir told AFP, confirming Basra would host the tournament between 12 Arab countries.

For years, Iraq has been busily building and upgrading stadiums and campaigning for its return to the international fold.

FIFA's decision followed an international friendly between Iraq and Saudi Arabia in the ultra-modern stadium in Basra on Feb.28.

Iraq has not played competitive internationals on home turf since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Agence France-Presse

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