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## IRAQ HOLDS BABYLON INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL AFTER 18 YEARS

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The Babylon International Festival kicked off Thursday after not being held in Iraq since the US invasion of the country in 2003.

The opening ceremony of the five-day festival was held in Babylon, which was once the capital of Babylonia, a state in ancient Mesopotamia. It included a speech by Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, the festival's official sponsor, followed by a speech by the governor of Babylon delivered by the festival's president.

The festival will feature many activities and events, including music, dancing, folk arts and singing.

In a statement, the Iraqi Culture Ministry said representatives of 54 countries including Russia, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Egypt, Syria and Kuwait will take part in the festival.

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