

# Blue Shield warns of 'irreparable damage' to Iranian heritage

## Iranica Desk

Following extensive diplomatic and cultural initiatives by Iran, including high-level consultations by the government, the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Cultural Heritage, and Science, as well as various civil society organizations, Blue Shield International has issued a formal statement addressing the status of cultural heritage in the region. This statement was issued in direct response to reports of military strikes by the US and the Zionist regime targeting several of Iran's historic landmarks and archaeological sites, according to IRNA. Underlining the funda-

mental necessity of safeguarding cultural property, Blue Shield International declared, "While the protection of human life and dignity must remain the paramount priority in any crisis, the protection of people is fundamentally incomplete without the preservation of their cultural heritage. Such legacy constitutes an intrinsic element of human identity and serves as a collective asset for all of humanity." The organization further echoed the grave concerns previously voiced by UNESCO regarding the vulnerability of historical sites across the region. It issued an urgent appeal to all parties involved in



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the conflict to refrain from any military actions or operations that could inflict irreparable damage upon historical monuments and cultural landscapes.

Additionally, the statement underscored that the protection of cultural property remains a cornerstone of International Humanitarian Law. It emphasized

that adherence to these international legal frameworks must be upheld as a binding standard of professional and military conduct, transcending all political considerations or geographical boundaries. "As an independent, neutral, and non-governmental organization dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage, Blue Shield International is continuously monitoring the condition of heritage sites, archives, libraries, and historic buildings throughout the region," the statement read. The organization added that it is mobilizing its extensive global network of experts to mitigate potential risks

and prevent further degradation of these invaluable cultural assets. Blue Shield International expressed its full readiness to cooperate with all relevant authorities and stakeholders to ensure the safety of cultural heritage. The organization also offered its formal support for initiatives aimed at minimizing damages and advancing toward peaceful resolutions. The statement, published on March 13, 2026, was officially signed by Professor Peter Stone, President of Blue Shield International. In response to the onset of the US-Israel conflict against Iran, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handi-

crafts organizations of some provinces — including West Azarbaijan, South Khorasan, Gilan, and Kermanshah — have initiated the urgent installation of the international "Blue Shield" emblem at their museums, archaeological sites, and historical monuments. Blue Shield International was formally established in 1996 through a strategic partnership between four leading global entities: the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Council on Archives (ICA), and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

# Record-breaking ceremonies celebrate Persian food traditions

## Iranica Desk

The holy city of Qom, in north-central Iran, witnessed the preparation of the world's largest ritual and civilizational Halva on Thursday night, a massive undertaking weighing over two tons. The event, held on the eve of the 23rd of the holy month of Ramadan, was organized by the "Tanoorkhaneh Nan-e Iran" (The Iranian Bread House). The ceremony attracted a large crowd where more than 15,000 pilgrims and those observing the fast (fasting faithful) were served

this traditional Iranian delicacy, chtn.ir wrote. While Iran boasts an impressive 131 distinct varieties of ritual Halva, this specific event was dedicated to showcasing one of the most unique and historically significant types of these traditional sweets. Characterized by its aromatic blend of saffron, rosewater, and cardamom, Persian Halva is far more than a simple dessert. It stands as a cornerstone of Iranian hospitality and spiritual life, traditionally shared during religious observances as a symbol of

community and devotion. The Halva ceremony follows another major cultural milestone earlier this month; from March 8 to 10, a staggering 21 tons of Samanu — a traditional Persian sweet paste—was prepared in a large-scale votive ritual along the same boulevard. Asghar Keshvari, Director of Tanoorkhaneh Nan-e Iran, emphasized that these initiatives are central to reviving the nation's culinary and civilizational heritage. "To date, our center has baked and introduced 313 types of na-

tional, local, and regional breads. We are currently implementing strategic programs to restore historical ovens (Tanoors), traditional mills, and ritual foods such as Samanu and Halva," Keshvari stated. Regarding the massive Samanu preparation, Keshvari noted that the large-scale production adhered strictly to traditional methods, utilizing whole-wheat flour with the active participation of the public and cultural enthusiasts. To further encourage community involvement,

a public campaign titled "Samanu Votive Offering" (Nazr-e Samanu) was launched. This cultural and ritual campaign was centered on the Prophet Azam Boulevard. "Through this public campaign, the Islamic world's first large-scale Samanu was produced using whole-wheat flour," the director added, highlighting the authenticity of the process. Keshvari expressed his optimism that with the continued support of the public and cultural institutions, Iran's culinary her-



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itage — which has faded over time — can be fully

revitalized and preserved for future generations.

# Patriotic women football stars to be welcomed in Iran

## Sports Desk

Prominent members of Iran's national women's football team, who made a patriotic decision to reject seductive and politically motivated asylum offers from Australia, have arrived in Malaysia to rejoin their teammates.

After a brief stay in Malaysia, the trio is scheduled to return to Tehran to reunite with their families and the nation. Meanwhile, Valiollah Mohammadi, Iran's Ambassador to Malaysia, met with members of the Iranian national women's football team, expressing his great pleasure in hosting the

representatives of Iran." Highlighting the status of Iranian sportswomen on the international stage, the ambassador added, "You are the women who have elevated Iran's name in global arenas and brought pride to our people. The fact that you remain committed to the sacred

authorities to provide the best possible services and facilities for the team under current conditions. He specifically noted the efforts of the cultural attaché and other embassy staff in supporting the national squad. The ambassador emphasized, "The people of Iran are eagerly awaiting your arrival and deeply appreciate your efforts and achievements."

He further revealed that Mehdi Taj, the President of the Football Federation, has confirmed plans for a grand official reception for the players upon their return to Tehran. Additionally, billboards celebrating the national team's success have already been installed throughout Tehran in cooperation with the city's municipality. Concluding the session, Mohammadi expressed his hope for the players' safe and swift return to their families. "We have tried to ensure a peaceful and satisfactory environment for you here. I look forward to seeing the continued powerful presence of Iranian women in international competitions and many more honors for our country in the near future," he added.



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According to IRNA, Mona Hamoudi, Zahra Sarbali, and Zahra Moshkekar reached Malaysia early Sunday morning. They were officially welcomed upon arrival by Farideh Shojaei, the Vice President of the Football Federation for Women's Affairs, and Marziyeh Jafari.

squad at the embassy. During the meeting, Mohammadi welcomed the team to Malaysia, stating, "We are honored to host our national women's football team. While we would have preferred to meet during the competitions, we are proud today to host you as worthy

national jersey despite all the temptations from the country's adversaries demonstrates your deep commitment and responsibility." Mohammadi expressed his appreciation for the coordination between various embassy departments and Malaysian au-

# Iran proposes relocating World Cup matches to Mexico

## Sports Desk

Iran's Ambassador to Mexico, Abolfazl Pasandideh, has called on FIFA to relocate the Iranian national team's 2026 World Cup matches from the United States to Mexico, citing the US government's refusal to cooperate on visas and logistical support. In a recent interview, Pasandideh clarified that while Iran remains committed to participating in the tournament, the US has failed to provide the necessary administrative and logistical backing for the team. "We emphasize once again that the US is not cooperating regarding visas. We are keen to participate, but

they are not providing the required support," he stated, according to IRNA. The ambassador proposed that FIFA intervene to facilitate Iran's participation by moving their fixtures to Mexico, one of the tournament's three co-hosts alongside Canada and the United States. "FIFA can intervene to ensure the Iranian national team can compete, but in Mexico," Pasandideh said, noting that while the final decision rests with Iran's Ministry of Sport and Youth, the alternative would be immediately welcomed. "We have no animosity toward the American people; our issue is with the US government. We have great affec-

tion for the Mexican people, and for us, the ideal scenario is to play our matches in Mexico." He added that if such a proposal is formally tabled, Iran would accept it, though the reaction of other teams in the group would need to be considered. Under the current schedule, Iran is placed in Group G alongside Belgium, New Zealand, and Egypt. All of Iran's group-stage matches are currently slated to be held on US soil, specifically in Los Angeles and Seattle. FIFA has yet to issue an official response or condemnation regarding the administrative hurdles mentioned by the Iranian diplomat.



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