

Iraqi forces hope to liberate Mosul from IS by June 10

30/05/2017 09:13 by admin

Mosul: Iraqi security forces are reportedly hopeful of liberating Mosul, the country's second-largest city, from the Islamic State (ISIS) by June 10.

Iraqi forces - File Pic

June 10 marks the third anniversary of the ISIS rule in Mosul.

According to a report in Daily Mail, the target gives the troops a little under a fortnight to clear the last remnants of the IS from Iraq's besieged city.

Much of Mosul, including the airport and university, are already under the control of the security forces.

However, an unknown number of IS fighters were still hidden among an estimated 165,000 civilians in the old city. The winding streets, blind alleyways and densely-packed buildings make military progress especially difficult, it said.

Major Qusay Al-Kinani, commander of Iraq's Special Operations Forces, told the Daily Telegraph: "Mosul fell to (the IS) on June 10, 2014, so by June 10 this year it must be liberated."

The claim has been greeted with some scepticism, as several previous deadlines for liberation have passed.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Monday said the forces were in the last stages of defeating the Islamic State in the remaining neighbourhoods of Mosul.

"The enemy (IS) is in a state of collapse and cannot achieve any of its goals in Mosul, which once they considered their capital," Abadi was quoted by Xinhua.

According to the Prime Minister, the security forces have freed about 95 per cent of Mosul.

"Life is returning to normal on the left bank of Mosul and on the right bank most of it has been freed. We will soon declare full liberation of the city," he said.

Abadi, who is also the commander-in-chief of Iraqi forces, last year promised to rid Iraq of the IS by the end of 2016. Military commanders have also said that the liberation would be finished before Ramadan -- which started last Friday.

The latest advance is part of a major offensive designed to secure the border areas with neighbouring Syria and cut off the IS supply routes between Mosul and the Syrian city of Raqqa, the capital of the IS caliphate.

Maan al-Saadi, commander of special operations, said the forces have taken control of 70 per cent of al-Saha neighbourhood in north of the IS-held old city centre and killed around 70 IS militants, most of them foreigners and non-Iraqi Arabs, in the battles during the past two days.

The operations near the Syrian border came as Iraqi forces, backed by the anti-IS international coalition, were conducting a major offensive to dislodge the IS militants from their major stronghold in western Mosul.

Mosul, 400 km north of Baghdad, has been under IS control since June 10, 2014, when government forces abandoned their weapons and fled, enabling militants to control parts of Iraq's northern and western regions.

- (With IANS inputs)