

## **Syrian army approaches IS occupied Palmyra: Reports**

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**Damascus:** Syrian troops were reported approaching the ancient city of Palmyra which has been captured by the Islamic State (IS) terror group, the media reported today.

After capturing two points on the outskirts of the city on Saturday, the forces have closed in on Palmyra, which fell to the IS group last May, Xinhua news agency reported citing pan-Arab al-Mayadeen TV.

Head of the Syrian antiquities department in Damascus, Maamoun Abdul-Karim, said capturing Palmyra would be "the end of a nightmare" for this millennia-old oasis city in the eastern countryside of Homs province.

According to sources, army backed by air force from the nearby T-4 military airbase is trying to storm the ancient city from its western rim, close to the historic castle of that ancient city.

Since its capture, the IS have destroyed the city's military prison and several ancient Islamic tombs.

The IS also put on public executions of government soldiers and people accused of working for the government.

Palmyra contains the monumental ruins of a great city that was one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world.

- IANS