

IS claims suicide bombing on stadium in Iraq that killed 29

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Baghdad: A suicide bomber blew himself up in a soccer stadium south of the Iraqi capital on Friday, killing 29 people and wounding 60, security officials said, as the military announced new gains on the ground against the Islamic State group.

The bombing took place during a match in the small stadium in the city of Iskanderiyah, 30 miles (50 kilometers) from Baghdad, the officials said. Medical officials confirmed the death toll. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the press.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack via a statement posted online, SITE intelligence group, a monitoring organization, reported.

IS has been waging a campaign of suicide bombings in and around the capital as Iraqi forces and their allies battle the militants in the north and west of the country.

The bombing came as Iraqi military spokesman Yahya Rusoul announced that Iraqi troops and Sunni tribal fighters recaptured the town of Kubeisa in western Anbar province from the Islamic State group. A day earlier, IS fighters were pushed out of a string of villages in Iraq's northern Nineveh province under cover of heavy coalition airstrikes.

Iraqi ground forces are working to build on recent gains in Anbar and prepare for an eventual push on the northern city of Mosul, the largest city held by the militants in the "caliphate" they declared across parts of Iraq and Syria. The U.S.-led coalition estimates that IS has lost 40 percent of the territory it once held in Iraq and around 20 percent of its territory in Syria.

Analysts and coalition officials say they expect that as it loses ground on the battlefield, it will turn to more insurgent style attacks in Iraq and internationally. On Tuesday, bombings in Brussels claimed by IS killed 31 people and injured nearly 300.

- AP