

RUSSIAN FORCES CLOSE IN ON MARIUPOL

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Piled-up miseries: A man walking past a storage place for burnt armed vehicles and cars on the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine, on Monday. AP

Russian troops aimed to take control of the city of Mariupol on Tuesday, part of an anticipated massive onslaught across eastern Ukraine, as defending forces tried desperately to hold them back.

Russia is believed to be trying to connect occupied Crimea with Moscow-backed separatist territories Donetsk and Luhansk in Donbas, and has laid siege to the strategically located city, once home to more than 4,00,000 people.

"It is likely that in the future the enemy will try to take control of the city of Mariupol, capture Popasna and launch an offensive in the direction of Kurakhove in order to reach the administrative borders of Donetsk region," the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said on Facebook.

The Russian Defence Ministry said its Army had thwarted an attempt to break the siege with "airstrikes and artillery fire" at a factory in a northern district of the city. But the Ukrainian Army insisted that "the defence of Mariupol continues".

Plea for more weapons

"The connection with the units of the defence forces that heroically hold the city is stable and maintained," the Land Forces of Ukraine wrote on Telegram.

In his nightly address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made another plea to his allies for more weapons to boost the defence of the city. "We are not getting as much as we need to end this war sooner. To completely destroy the enemy on our land... in particular, to unblock Mariupol," he said.

He made a similar appeal for military assistance to South Korea's National Assembly earlier in the day, telling lawmakers Russia had "completely destroyed Mariupol and burned it to ashes" killing "at least tens of thousands of people".

Late on Monday, Britain said it was trying to verify reports that Russia had also used chemical weapons in the city. Elsewhere in the east, heavy bombardment continued as civilians were urged to flee ahead of an expected Russian troop surge in the region.

Russian forces are reinforcing around the Donbas region, notably near the town of Izyum, but have not yet launched a full offensive, Pentagon officials said on Monday.

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