

Ukraine troops control Russian town of Sudzha now: Zelensky

Largest Piece Of Land Seized By Kyiv Since Invasion; It Holds Measuring Station For Russian Gas That Flows To Europe

Kyiv: Ukrainian Prez Volodymyr Zelensky said Thursday that the country's troops have full control of the Russian town of Sudzha in the Kursk region in their incursion into Russian territory.

The town, the largest that Ukraine has reportedly seized so far, had a prewar population of around 5,000 people. It holds a measuring station for Russian natural gas that flows through Ukrainian pipelines to Europe. Natural gas flows from West Siberian gas fields through pipes that pass through Sudzha and cross the Ukrainian border into Ukraine's system.

Zelensky said a Ukrainian military commander's office is being set up in Sudzha. He didn't elaborate on the details or the functions of the office.

The claim couldn't be independently verified. Russia did not immediately respond to Zelensky's statement. There was no indication of any disruption of the gas flow through Sudzha, which accounts for about 3% of Europe's imports.

Kursk acting governor Alexei Smirnov on Thursday ordered the evacuation of the Glushkovo region, about 45km NW of Sudzha, as Ukraine's incursion into the region entered its second week. The evacuation order suggests Ukrainian forces are gradually advancing toward the area. Authorities say more than 120,000 residents in the region already have been evacuated. AP



A destroyed Russian border post at Sudzha Border Crossing in Kursk

A Russian court jails US-Russian dual nat'l for \$52 donation to Kyiv

US-Russian dual national Ksenia Khavana was convicted Thursday of treason in a Russian court and sentenced to 12 years in prison on charges stemming from a donation of about \$52 to a charity aiding Ukraine. Khavana was arrested in the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg in Feb and pleaded guilty in a closed trial last week, news reports said. Khavana, a 33-year-old former ballet dancer, reportedly obtained US citizenship after marrying an American and moving to Los Angeles. She had returned to Russia to visit her family. She reportedly had her phone confiscated after arriving in Yekaterinburg in January and police found evidence on the phone of the donation. REUTERS

Report points at Kyiv role in Nord Stream blasts; Ukraine denies

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak Thursday denied his country's involvement in explosions which damaged the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. The pipelines, transporting gas under the Baltic Sea, were ruptured by explosions in Sept 2022. Polish prosecutors said Wednesday that Poland had received a European arrest warrant issued by Berlin in connection with the attack, but the suspect, a Ukrainian man, has already left Poland. On Friday, the WSJ reported that top Ukrainian officials were involved in what happened. However, Ukraine blamed Russia. "Such an act can only be carried out with extensive technical and financial resources ... and who possessed all this at the time of the bombing? Only Russia," Podolyak said. REUTERS

India develops 'Kamikaze' drones with 1,000km range

New Delhi: Taking a cue from the ongoing Middle East conflict and the Ukraine-Russia war where both sides have been using self-destructive drones to attack rival's assets, India's elite research institute National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) has developed a desi 'Kamikaze' drone that is driven by an indigenously built engine that gives them a range of 1,000 km, reports **Surendra Singh**.

NAL director Abhay Pashilkar, who is leading the research into self-destructive drones, told the media that such drones have added new dimensions to how wars are fought. These low-cost and effective unmanned aerial vehicles fly at a certain altitude, loiter around its target with explosive charges and detonate the explosives once they hit the target. They are controlled from a command centre.

The 30HP Wankel engine in these drones allows them to carry 100-120kg weight, which includes 30-40kg of explosives. NAL is a constituent of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), which was established in 1959 and is the only govt aerospace R&D laboratory in the country's civilian sector.

PM: Must instil dread of death in those who perpetrate crimes against women

Endorsement Of Death Likely 1st By A PM In I-Day Speech

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Expressing worry and pain over continuing crimes against women, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech called for swift probe in all such cases and harsh punishment including death penalty as a deterrent for others disposed to committing such "demonic acts".

"The fear of punishment must be instilled among the perpetrators... Those who commit such demonic acts should realise that they will be hanged to death," said PM in his I-Day speech which followed the countrywide outrage over the brutal rape and murder of a woman doctor in a Kolkata hospital and alleged cover up by authorities.

He urged the country, society, and the state governments to "address this matter with utmost urgency".

The endorsement of death penalty for "demonic" acts like brutal rapes — perhaps the first by a PM in an Independence Day speech — comes amid a campaign to abolish the death penalty even for crimes falling in the "rarest-of-rare" category, the threshold devised by Supreme Court for minimising its use. While making his pitch for the capital punishment, PM referred to an-



Modi's endorsement of death penalty comes amid a campaign to abolish capital punishment even for crimes falling in the 'rarest-of-rare' category, the threshold devised by Supreme Court for minimising its use

ger and frustration among women over continuing brutalities against them. "Today, from the Red Fort, I once again express my pain. As a society, we will have to think seriously about the atrocities against our mothers, sisters, and daughters. There is anger among common people because of this. I can feel that rage," he said.

The PM also stressed the need to amplify not just the news and discussion on the crime but also cases of punishment to ensure deterrence. He said, "When a person of such demonic tendency is punished, it does not make headlines. It is the need of the hour that extensive discus-

sion on those receiving punishment is held so that those committing this sin understand that this crime leads to hanging (death penalty). I feel it is very important to instil this fear," he said.

In the past 28 years, as many as six convicts have been hanged for rape-cum-murder cases — Kanta Prasad Tiwari in 1997, Dhananjay Chatterjee in 2004 and four convicts in Nirbhaya murder cases in 2020. The Supreme Court had endorsed capital punishment in all these cases.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 (BNS) that has replaced the Indian Penal Code provides for life imprisonment or death penalty in

case of rape of girls below the age of 18 years. All gangrape cases are punishable with imprisonment up to 20 years or life imprisonment.

While talking about taking pride in the history behind the freedom struggle, the PM highlighted that it is important to note that the govt has replaced the criminal laws — the IPC, CrPC and the Indian Evidence Act that had their roots in the pre-Independence British era with three new laws overhauling the criminal justice system. He said that the new laws are not just about punitive measures but strengthen the resolve for ensuring justice for the common man.

'Anti-graft drive to intensify, will create fear in minds of corrupt'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: If there were any doubts after the June 4 poll verdict — which saw NDA taking a hit — regarding the pace of the anti-corruption drive by central agencies, PM Modi cleared them in his Independence Day speech, declaring a full-scale war against the corrupt. Without naming any opposition party, he said there have been attempts by some to glorify the "termite of corruption".

He pledged to instill fear in the minds of the corrupt "so the tradition of looting the common citizen comes to an end", while hinting at his commitment to give a free hand to anti-corruption agencies that had not shied away from arresting two sitting CMs of opposition-governed states in his previous term.

"I know this battle comes at a price; it costs me my reputation. But no reputation can be more important than the nation... my fight against corruption will continue with complete sincerity and at a fast pace, and action will be taken against the corrupt," he said, making it clear that the pace of the anti-graft drive is only going to increase, belying conjectures in some quarters that a minority BJP govt may not risk actions against corruption at high places, particularly against political adversaries.