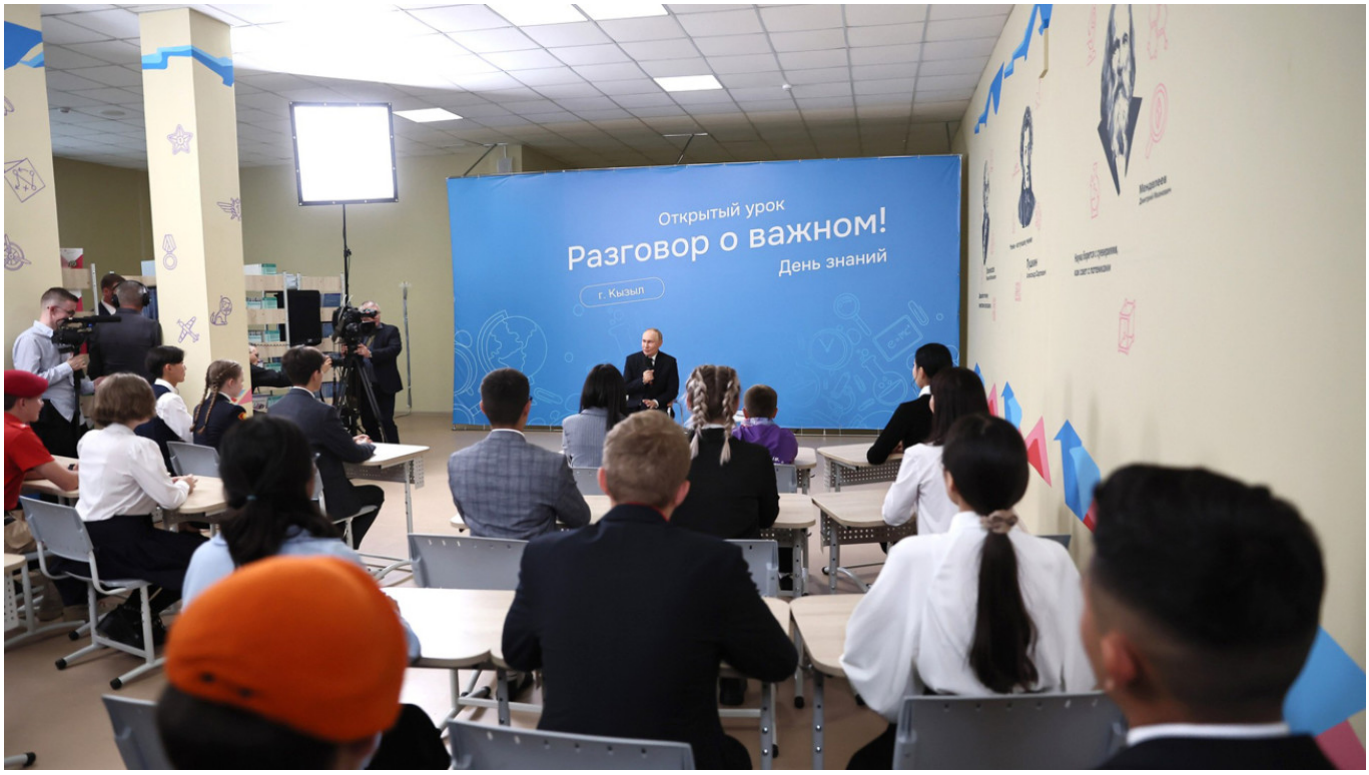
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Putin Says Kursk Incursion Will Not Stop Russian Advance in Eastern Ukraine

By AFP

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President Vladimir Putin said Monday that Kyiv's incursion into southwestern Russia's Kursk region will not halt Moscow's advance in eastern Ukraine and vowed to deal with what he called Ukrainian "bandits" on Russian territory.

Ukraine's surprise incursion into the Kursk region on Aug. 6 has so far displaced around 130,000 people, with Kyiv's forces having seized control of dozens of towns and villages near the border in an attempt to divert forces away from the front line in eastern Ukraine.

However, Russian forces have pressed on with their advance in the partially occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

"Their calculation was to stop our offensive actions in key parts of the Donbas," Putin told a group of students in the republic of Tyva. "The result is known... They did not achieve

stopping our advance in the Donbas."

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The Kremlin leader made his remarks during an event marking the first day of the school year in Russia, as well as ahead of a visit to Mongolia, which borders Tyva.

"Yes, people are going through difficult experiences, especially in the Kursk region," Putin said. "But the enemy's main goal — to stop our offensive in the Donbas — was not achieved."

He added that Russian forces in eastern Ukraine were making advances at a "rate that we have not seen for a long time."

"Of course, we have to deal with these bandits that entered the territory of the Russian Federation, specifically the Kursk region, attempting to destabilize the situation in the border areas," Putin said.

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