

NATIONAL

PM Modi divides 77 ministers into 8 groups, tasks them with improving governance

In a major push for a hands-on approach to governance, the Modi government is planning to rope in young professionals, seek suggestions from retiring officials and make the best use of technology for project monitoring, besides various other steps to be overseen by eight different groups comprising of members from the entire Council of Ministers, sources said. The 77 ministers have been divided into eight groups to develop technology-based resources, create a pool of professionals for recruiting in their teams and other similar initiatives to be adopted in the offices of all ministers' offices to bring more transparency and further improve and efficiency of the Modi government, the sources said. This exercise of dividing the ministers into eight groups was done following 'Chintan Shivirs' (brainstorming sessions) of the entire council that were chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with each meeting lasting for nearly five hours. A total of five such sessions were held – one each on Personal Efficiency, Focused Implementation, Ministry Functioning and Stakeholder Engagement, Party Coordination and Effective Communication and the last one was on Parliamentary practices. All these meetings primarily focused on improving the efficiency and the delivery system of the Modi government. The forming of groups is another step in that direction, broadly focusing on overall improvement in the governance by making ministers more hands-on approach, the sources said.

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India's air defence gets a big boost, Russia starts delivery of S-400 missiles

In a big boost to India's air-defence capabilities, Russia has started delivery of the much awaited **S-400 missile system** for deployment on schedule this year, official sources have confirmed. India had bought the system for over US\$ 5 billion in 2018, in a deal that became contentious amid a threat of sanctions from the US on countries engaging in defence deals with Russia. "The supplies of the S-400 air defence system to India have started and are proceeding on schedule," the agency quoted Dmitry Shugaev, director of Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, as saying. There was no official word from the Indian side. The delivery of the weapons system was expected to begin before the end of this year. The delivery of parts has already begun through sea and air routes, sources said. India had bought five units of the system in 2018, and had made the first tranche of the payment, \$800 million, a year later. The S-400 is among the most advanced air-defence systems in the world, with a range of around 400 km. It is capable of protecting its air defence bubble against rockets, missiles, cruise missiles and even aircraft.

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