

Putin arrives today, likely to sign 20 agreements

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INDIA AND Russia are likely to sign about 20 pacts in areas ranging from defence, nuclear energy, space and economy during Russia's President Vladimir Putin's two-day visit to India from Thursday.

Putin is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday.

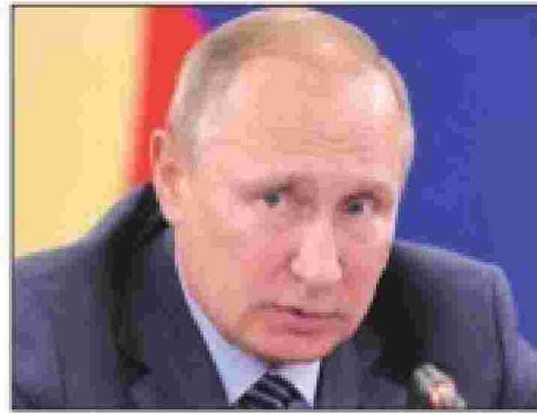
One of the expected outcomes which will be announced will be the joint India-Russia counter-terrorism exercise, Indra-2018, set to be held from November 18 to 28.

On Tuesday, Putin's top foreign policy aide Yury Ushakov had confirmed that the Russian President will oversee the signing of the S-400 air defence systems deal. This was the first official confirmation from the Russian government at the highest level of the deal, which is worth more than \$5 billion, about the signing of the agreement.

An experienced diplomat, Ushakov, 71, was appointed Putin's aide in 2012 and was Russia's ambassador to the US for 10 years from 1998.

The S-400 deal has been caught in a diplomatic crossfire between the United States and Russia, with Washington threatening New Delhi and other partners with sanctions if their defence deals with Russia go through.

Ushakov told reporters in Moscow that Russia and India



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plan to sign more than 20 documents at the end of the talks. Sources in New Delhi told *The Indian Express* these will cover areas such as nuclear, space, economic issues, among others.

"Apart from a conversation tete-a-tete, the sides will have talks with restricted attendance, then talks in an extended format, and then a working breakfast as a continuation of the latter talks where ministers and leading businessmen will be present," Ushakov said, according to Russian news agency TASS.

"Next on the itinerary is the signing of bilateral documents... We have 23 documents at this moment and some of them are still in the phase of coordination," TASS quoted Ushakov.

Putin and Modi are expected to sign a joint statement on Friday, Ushakov said in Moscow.

EXPLAINED

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