

Council of ministers discusses developing backward districts

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NEW DELHI

The council of ministers headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday deliberated over the flagship schemes of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government and ways to improve the status of India's backward districts.

This comes against the backdrop of the government bringing in senior bureaucrats from various ministries last November to act as *prabhari* officers to rapidly transform backward districts. In the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government is looking to reap political dividends from success stories.

"The council of ministers discussed ways of raising the status of backward districts at par with better performing districts. It also discussed the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan. The meeting also reviewed the performance of the Modi government in four years, shared experience and deliberated on the road ahead," said a government official aware of the development, requesting anonymity.

Speaking at a conference organized by the NITI Aayog on transformation of the most backward districts in the country earlier this year, Modi said that these districts should not be seen as just poor or backward, but as sites of potential transformation.

"The council of ministers

On the agenda

The council of ministers deliberated over the NDA govt's flagship schemes

It took stock of NDA's four years and deliberated on how to project a collective growth story to the public

It also discussed the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan scheme for least developed villages

discussed the gram Swaraj Abhiyan 2.0 with a focus on uplifting the socioeconomic standard of people in 117 aspirational districts. It took stock of the four year of the NDA and deliberated on how to project a collective growth story to the public. The penetration of mudra loan schemes in underprivileged areas and districts was also discussed as it will help in creation of jobs in rural India," said a second govern-

ment official who also didn't want to be named.

Distress in rural India has been fuelled by consecutive years of record harvests that have led to a steep fall in crop prices. "Also, pre-

sentations including one on Gram Swaraj Abhiyan was made," said a third person aware of the development requesting anonymity, referring to the scheme aimed at improving the socioeconomic indices of India's villages that are lagging behind in areas such as health, financial inclusion and electricity connections.

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Backward districts should be seen as sites of potential transformation, prime minister Modi has said