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Session to be a stormy affair

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The winter session of the State legislature, which starts in Bengaluru from Monday, is expected to clear a few controversial Bills, while the Opposition has a ready arsenal to attack the government.

The ruling BJP, caught in the conundrum of Cabinet expansion, caste-based appeasement politics by forming corporations and "unsavoury" developments around the Chief Minister's office, will have much to answer for if the Opposition puts its act together.

Several Bills

A few ordinances promulgated by the government would be introduced as Bills, including the Industrial Disputes and Certain other Laws (Karnataka Amendment) Bill, 2020. This was not passed in the Upper House during the monsoon session held in September last. It remains to be seen if the proposed anti-cow slaughter Bill will be tabled this session, while the controversial "love jihad" law may only figure in discussions.

Legislative Assembly

Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri has proposed to discuss the "one nation - one election" theme propagated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the last two days of the session, December 14 and 15.

The Opposition, particularly the Congress, which has questioned the "existence of the government" in the State, is expected to utilise the session to corner Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on the alleged suicide attempt by his political secretary N.R. Santosh and multiple postponements of the Cabinet expansion. The latter has led to groupism and apparent paralysis of the administration.

The alleged confession made by A.H. Vishwanath, former Minister and BJP MLC, that the Chief Minister had sent a "big amount of money" to him during the byelection to Hunsur Assembly constituency is expected to be raised by the Congress.

Caste turmoil

The Chief Minister's proposal to seek reservation for Veerashiva-Lingayats under the Central OBC quota, the Centre's silence on the pre-

vious Congress government's recommendation for inclusion of some communities in the ST quota, and formation of caste-based corporations are expected to provide ammunition to the Opposition. Nomination of heads to boards and corporations when the State is facing financial constraints is expected to embarrass the government.

Issues related to elections to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, handling of COVID-19, handling of cases related to K.G. Halli and D.G. Halli, delaying of compensation to flood-affected farmers, and the Centre's denial of adequate funds to the State for drought and floods relief works are expected to figure during the session.

The ruling BJP will try to turn the tables on the Congress, reminding it of defeats in the byelections and polls held elsewhere in the country. The role of the Opposition JD(S) in the session is being viewed with curiosity since the party is seen as co-sying up to the ruling BJP.

Many legislators are likely to skip the session owing to their involvement in campaigning in elections to gram panchayats.