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Yediyurappa tunes into FM, starts ground work for State Budget

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ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister B S Yediyurappa has a new challenge on hand. Of presenting the State Budget, likely in first week of March. He has started preparing for his first budget after taking over as the Chief Minister in 2018. He is expected to go full throttle after December 31.

He has tuned into FM (finance management). Sources in the CMO said Yediyurappa is meeting experts from various sectors to elicit their views, while the Finance Department officials are gathering data from all other departments on projects and programmes to be included in the budget.

According to analysts, Yediyurappa will have many challenges at this juncture when the country is facing econom-

ic slowdown and with the state not receiving the GST component from the Union government. A large amount of money needs to be allocated for farm loan waiver announced by the previous government.

There is a lot of accumulated debt which the government has to repay.

At the same time, the State finances are not looking good, economist Prof R S Deshpande told *The New Indian Express*.

Karnataka is an entertainment hub, after Mumbai and Delhi. "The CM may increase entertainment tax as well as Excise," he said. He may either discontinue or reduce allocations for

some popular schemes of the previous governments, though he may not make those announcements in the budget speech, he said.

Though funds allocated for social welfare schemes are left unused, Yediyurappa will not be able to directly divert them for other schemes, Deshpande said.

However, the Chief Minister will not just be looking to manage ongoing schemes and programmes announced by previous governments, but announce his own schemes,

especially big ticket announcement for irrigation projects.

And mobilising resources for his own schemes without having to cut down too much on ongoing schemes will be the real challenge. **P7**



Greater focus on agriculture sector likely in state budget

By 27/12/19
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IN 2011 when Yediyurappa was the CM and also held the Finance portfolio, he presented the budget in two parts, for the first time in the State's history. One focussed totally on the agriculture sector while the second one dealt with the rest.

He had then allocated Rs 17,857 crore for development of agriculture and irrigation sectors. This time too, there is a buzz that the CM is likely to present a similar budget. Sources from the CMO said though it is not clear if the CM will present a separate agriculture budget, he is definitely going to focus more on the farm sector.

"The CM will stress on farmers' woes, fix minimum support price to crops, establish new markets, more cold storages, prevention of middlemen and many more," sources said.

Challenges before BSY

- Allocation of funds for farm loan waiver scheme
- Continuing a number of welfare schemes announced by previous govt
- GST compensation from Centre
- Allocation of funds for flood relief and compensation
- Economic slowdown