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# Sabarimala: In a U-turn, Kerala's Travancore Devaswom Board supports entry of women of all ages

(Gns. News) A view of the Lord Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala, Kerala. File |Photo Credit: Vipin Chandran The Supreme Court has reserved its verdict on a batch of petitions seeking review of its September 2018 judgement allowing the entry of women of all ages into the Sabarimala shrine. The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), which runs the historic Sabarimala temple in Kerala, took a U-turn in the Supreme Court on Wednesday by supporting its verdict which had allowed women of all age groups to enter the shrine. The Board, which also comprise the State government nominees, told a five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi that it is high time that a particular class not be discriminated on the ground of "biological attributes". A view of the Lord Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala in Kerala. Kerala govt opposes pleas seeking review of SC's Sabarimala verdict In the forenoon, the Kerala government



took the stand that it was in agreement with the September 28, 2018 verdict and had urged dismissal of petitions seeking review of the verdict. "Article 25 (1) equally entitles all persons to practice religion," senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for TDB, told the Bench which also comprise Justices R.F.

Nariman, A.M. Khanwilkar, D.Y. Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra. The Board had earlier vehemently opposed the PIL by Indian Young Lawyers Association saying that the celibate character of Lord Aiyappa at Sabarimala temple was a unique religious feature which was protected under the constitution.

"Women cannot be excluded from any walk of life on biological attributes... equality is the dominant theme of the Constitution", said Mr. Dwivedi adding that people should gracefully accept the apex court verdict. The apex court on Wednesday reserved its verdict on a batch of petitions seeking review of the

verdict allowing the entry of women of all ages into the Sabarimala shrine. On September 28, a five-judge Constitution Bench, headed by the then CJI Dipak Misra, in a 4:1 verdict had paved the way for entry of women of all ages into the shrine, saying the ban amounted to gender discrimination.

## BJP attacks Congress over Robert Vadra's ED summons

(Gns. News) Robert Vadra is expected to appear before the ED on Wednesday in connection with a money laundering case. The Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday attacked the Congress over the Enforcement Directorate's (ED's) summons to Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's husband Robert Vadra to appear before it in connection with a money laundering case. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra alleged that Mr. Vadra benefited from a petroleum and a defence deal which took place in 2008-09 when the UPA was in power. Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, he claimed that Mr. Vadra, brother-in-law of Congress president Rahul Gandhi, utilised the money to buy posh properties worth several crore rupees in London. Quoting an e-mail trail, he alleged that Mr. Vadra's company received "kickbacks" from a series of companies floated to "turn black money into white". "The 2019 Lok Sabha



election is a fight between the gang of corrupt versus transparency of Narendra Modi government," he said. Mr. Vadra is expected to appear before the Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday in connection with the money laundering case relating to alleged possession of illegal foreign assets.

## Linkage of PAN with Aadhaar is mandatory for filing I-T return: SC

(Gns. News) A five-judge Constitution Bench had held that Aadhaar would remain mandatory for filing of I-T returns and allotment of PAN. File (representational image) The Supreme Court has said that linkage of Permanent Account Number (PAN) with Aadhaar is mandatory for filing of Income Tax returns. A Bench comprising Justices A.K. Sikri and S. Abdul Nazeer said the top court has already decided the matter and upheld the Section 139AA of the Income Tax Act. The court's direction came on an appeal filed by the Centre against a Delhi High Court order allowing two persons, Shreya Sen and Jayshree Satpute, to file Income Tax returns for 2018-19 without linking their Aadhaar and PAN numbers. "The aforesaid order was passed by the High Court having regard to the fact that the matter was pending consideration in this Court. Thereafter, this Court has decided the matter and upheld the vires of section 139AA of the Income Tax Act. In view thereof, linkage of PAN with Aadhaar is mandatory," the Bench said. The top court noted that with regard to Assessment Year 2018-19, it has been informed that the two petitioners had filed the Income Tax returns in terms of the orders of the High Court and the assessment has also been completed. "We therefore make it clear that for the assessment year 2019-20, the income tax return shall be filed in terms of the judgment passed by this court. The special leave petition is disposed of in the above terms," the Bench said in an order on Monday. The petitioners had told the High Court that "despite orders, and multiple attempts they have not been able to file their ITR, since there is no available option to opt-out of providing an Aadhaar or Aadhaar Enrolment number during e-filing, on the website". The apex court on September 26, 2018, had declared the Centre's flagship Aadhaar scheme as constitutionally valid but struck down some of its provisions including its linking with bank accounts, mobile phones and school admissions. The court's direction came on an appeal filed by the Centre against a Delhi High Court order allowing two persons, Shreya Sen and Jayshree Satpute, to file Income Tax returns for 2018-19 without linking their Aadhaar and PAN numbers. "The aforesaid order was passed by the High Court



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Assessment Year 2018-19, it has been informed that the two petitioners had filed the Income Tax returns in terms of the orders of the High Court and the assessment has also been completed. "We therefore make it clear that for the assessment year 2019-20, the income tax return shall be filed in terms of the judgment

passed by this court. A five-judge Constitution Bench had held that while Aadhaar would remain mandatory for filing of I-T returns and allotment of PAN, it would not be mandatory to link Aadhaar to bank accounts and telecom service providers cannot seek its linking for mobile connections.

## Former Pakistan PM Gilani stopped from leaving country

(Gns. News) Former Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani was stopped from leaving the country by security officials at the Lahore airport late on Tuesday night. According to the Federal Investigation Agency, Mr. Gilani had reached the Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore to catch his flight for South Korea via Bangkok to attend a conference. However, his name was on the no-fly list. "At the immigration counter, Mr. Gilani was told that his name was placed on the black list therefore he could not leave the country," the FIA said, adding that it was following orders from the interior ministry. Reacting strongly, the senior Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader said he had always appeared in court in the different ongoing cases against him. "There was no point in placing my name on (the) no-fly list. I was not fleeing the country. Prime Minister Imran Khan's sole agenda seems to be targeting his political opponents," he said. The ruling Pa-



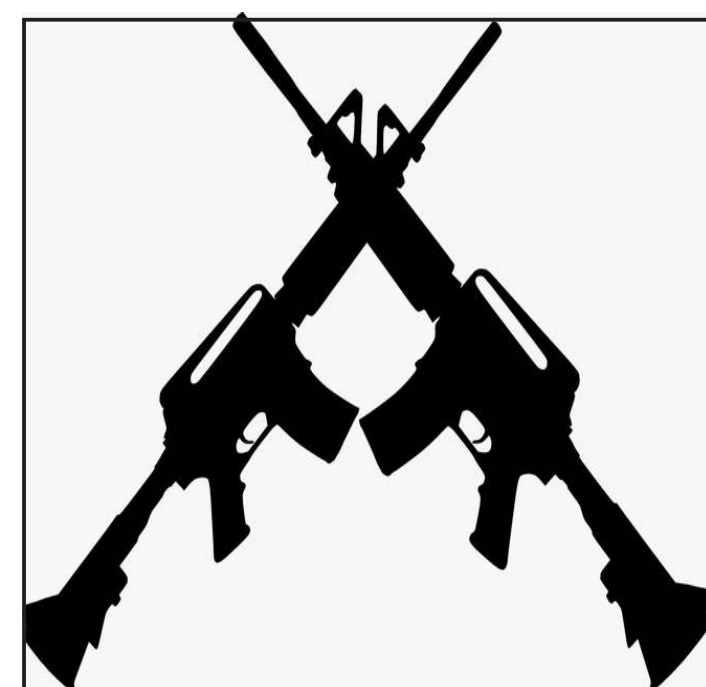
kistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government should have informed me about blacklisting my name. Mr. Gilani said, adding that he will challenge the "illegal decision of the government". Mr. Gilani is facing several corruption cases and last week, the accountability court of Islamabad had rejected his plea seeking exemption from personal appearance in a

case related to awarding alleged illegal advertising contract to a private ad agency. He is accused of misusing authority to illegally grant Messrs Midas an advertising contract in contravention of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules. The act is reported to have cost the national treasury ?129.07 million.

## J&K-based Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen banned: MHA

(Gns. News) Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen came into existence in 1990 with the objective of "liberation of Kashmir". The Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM), which has been fighting for "liberation of Kashmir" and involved in a series of terror acts, has been banned by the government, the Home Ministry said on Wednesday. In a notification, the Ministry said the Central government believes that the TuM is involved in terrorism as it has committed and participated in various acts of terrorism in India and its members are getting financial as well as logistic support from their handlers based abroad. The Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen came into existence in 1990 with the objective of "liberation of Kashmir" and has been actively pursuing the same by way of acts of terror, the Ministry said. "Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (a) of sub-section (1) of section 35 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, the Central government hereby makes the following further amendments in the First Schedule to the said Act, namely:- In the First Schedule to the said Act, the terror group has also committed acts of terrorism and promoting acts of terrorism. It has been engaged in radicalisation and recruitment of youth for terrorist activities in India. The notification said a number of cases have been registered by the Jammu and Kashmir Police in the recent past, in

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which it is found that the TuM has played a major role in commission of terrorist acts and a number of its cadre have been arrested. In the cases, it was also

found that the group is running terrorist training centres for Kashmiri youth and is likely to recruit more youth from the Jammu and Kashmir, it said.

## Karnataka Budget session: BJP disrupts Governor's address, some Congress MLAs absent

(Gns. News) BJP members protest as Governor V.R. Vala addresses the State Legislative Assembly in Bengaluru on Wednesday. BJP members protest as Governor V.R. Vala addresses the State Legislative Assembly in Bengaluru on Wednesday. The Budget session in Karnataka Legislature began on a stormy note on Wednesday with BJP MLAs disrupting the Governor's address by walking into the well of the House and shouting slogans against the Congress-JD(S) coalition government. The Governor, Vajubhai Vala, had to cut short his address. He read out only two pages of his 22-page speech. The BJP contended that the government did not enjoy support of its MLAs and is therefore a "sham". Some Congress MLAs, who are displeased with the ruling coalition and are believed to be in touch with the BJP, were conspicuous by their absence in the House. This further fuelled speculation on the BJP's continued efforts on bringing down the government.



Speaking to press persons later, BJP leader Sriramulu claimed that nearly 15 MLAs of the ruling coalition were absent on Wednesday.



## Editorial

Unedifying episode:  
On Kolkata stand-off

In its ostensibly even-handed intervention in the stand-off between the Central and West Bengal governments over the manner of investigation of the Saradha Chit Fund case, the Supreme Court has de-escalated political tensions, at least for now. The decision allowed both sides in the face-off to claim "moral victory" — even if it was West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who was forced to climb down from the aggressive posture she took in denying the Central Bureau of Investigation room to question Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar. However, while ordering him to cooperate with the CBI in "neutral" Shillong, the Court restrained the CBI from taking any coercive action against Mr. Kumar. The Police Commissioner and his Special Investigation Team investigating the chit fund case had been served a number of notices to appear before the CBI before it sent a team to his house in Kolkata. While Ms. Banerjee may have reason to believe that the timing of the CBI's operation was politically motivated, her government's response — manhandling and detaining the CBI officials — was shocking and inexcusable. In the polarised political atmosphere, her belligerence expectedly secured the backing of a large number of Opposition parties, and even had the Congress rally around her during an impromptu sit-in protest. However, in attempting to obstruct the CBI action in a court-ordered investigation, Ms. Banerjee once again demonstrated that she is prone to taking arguments over administrative procedures to the streets. A decade ago, she tarnished her credentials as the Opposition leader who would dethrone the Left Front combine in West Bengal with her agitation over the Singur land acquisition. But her attempt now to bring the State, where she heads the government, to a grinding halt speaks poorly of her political maturity. Ms. Banerjee is free to read political motives into the actions of a Central agency — but she must conduct that fight politically and by heeding her responsibilities as a Chief Minister. To hold a dharna in aid of an officer who is required for questioning does her no credit. There are bound to be questions whether this matter should have been escalated to such an unpleasant level. The CBI says there was no proper response to the earlier summonses it sent to the Police Commissioner, and alleges that he could have destroyed evidence that was initially gathered by the Special Investigation Team that he had supervised in the initial stage of the probe. But it is doubtful whether descending on a senior officer's residence on a Sunday evening with a large team of officers was the right course of action for the CBI, as it was liable to be interpreted as a high-handed attempt to browbeat and embarrass the State government. The only way the CBI can escape this impression is by showing that it was justified in demanding the questioning of Mr. Kumar and establishing proof of its suspicions about his role in covering up the scam.

## The 2019 election is going to be all about alliances: Ruchir Sharma

(Gns. News) The global investor on the forthcoming general election, the anti-incumbency trend and why he thinks the Indian state is socialist.

In his latest book, 'Democracy on the Road: A 25 Year Journey Through India', investor Ruchir Sharma has catalogued the 27 national and State elections that he has covered over a quarter of a century in his personal capacity. Mr. Sharma, who is the head of emerging markets and chief global strategist at Morgan Stanley Investment Management, discusses the 2019 general election, explains why India has the highest anti-incumbency rate among major democracies and why it can never be a China on economic reforms. Excerpts: There is a thread running through your book about India's "deep distaste for incumbents". Do you mean Indians instinctively throw out governments, whatever their record? The word anti-incumbency was coined in India. When I write for The New York Times or such publications, and I use the phrase, they don't know what I'm talking about because the phrase was coined here. That's because India has the highest rate of anti-incumbency among major democracies in the world. In the U.S. and the U.K., most incumbents tend to get re-elected. In the U.S., for example, two-thirds of Presidents and Governors who stand get re-elected; in India, two-thirds lose their elections. That's what the data say. There are two or three reasons why this happens. The foremost is that the state in India is broken. Politicians want to do stuff and promise stuff, but the state is just broken and cannot deliver. It just falls through the cracks. For example, yesterday, I was in Bijoor [Uttar Pradesh], and before the District Magistrate's office, a big protest broke out by sugar cane farmers over the question of dues. The whole issue is that you can keep announcing things, like minimum support price, but the moment you take your payment slip to the Food Corporation of India, they give you the runaround. The mechanism is so broken that your daily interaction with the government is very frustrating and possibly the only thing you can do is vote people out. Secondly, it doesn't take much to vote people out because of the fragmented



polity. In most States in India, you can win most seats by securing 30% of the vote share, so then just a 3-4% vote swing is enough to change the fortunes of a government, or if the Opposition comes together, it can change things. These are factors that distinguish India from other countries. There have been many instances of governments being voted back. How do you explain that? Again, there are a couple of things. There was a period of time, between 2005 and 2010, when a lot of incumbents won elections in India. A couple of things happened in that period. One, the economy was booming and inflation was fairly low, and two, because the economy was booming there was a lot of welfare that could be done, as governments were able to spend on those programmes. This really helped those governments come

back to power. Having said that, one of the more insightful statements which I have repeated twice in the book is by a Mangaluru MLA, U.T. Khader, who said that winning elections in India is like fighting a battery of six tests with a minimum passing mark on each. You can't rely on just one factor — if you don't do enough welfareism, you will lose; you have to get the caste arithmetic and religious politics right; or some huge allegation of corruption hits you. In American politics, there is a far more obvious connection between economics and politics. That argument appears simplistic in the Indian context. You say that India's national elections are a series of State elections. Can you explain that? That's what happened in 2004, in 2009, and, in fact, in most non-wave elections, unlike the 1984-85 Rajiv Gandhi wave and the mini wave, mainly in north

India, for Narendra Modi in 2014. In Delhi and Mumbai, we are pre-occupied by questions like, "If Modi doesn't return in 2019, then who comes in his place?" But it doesn't work that way in the rest of India. We are a truly parliamentary system. One bit of data that I keep quoting is that in 2004, the gap between Atal Bihari Vajpayee's popularity and that of Sonia Gandhi's was much larger than the current one between Modi and Rahul Gandhi, and yet because she was able to stitch good alliances, the Congress was able to win. Even this election, it's going to go State by State. Coming to political personalities, you say that Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati hasn't been able to accrue much influence outside Uttar Pradesh or grow beyond it. It's amazing to me how no regional leader has been able to grow nationally, and with Mayawati, you would have thought with a large Dalit population across the country, she would have become a pan-Indian presence. But the fact remains that Dalits are not a monolithic bloc of votes. The one State where I remember people telling me that Mayawati could have a big influence was Maharashtra, and yet she is a complete non-entity there. Being a prime ministerial candidate is a different matter and more a negotiation based on how many seats she gets, but her case proves to me that India is truly a 'continent' of 29 States and it is almost impossible for a leader who is strong in one State to replicate it everywhere else. A part of your interest in politics was also to see whether there would be a leader who could push economic re-

forms. In the book, you come to the conclusion that the Indian DNA is statist and socialist. In this country, there is no constituency for privatisation today. Is there any scenario in which you think that any big push for privatisation will be launched after the 2019 polls? I don't think so. There was some chance in 2002, there was some chance with Modi in 2014. To me that is the evidence — that what I said about statist stands. The good thing in India is that the private sector is so vibrant because of some liberalisation in the past that it can carry the can, but that is also why India can never grow like China. In the early years of its development, China had no welfare state; it spent entirely on roads and infrastructure. The Indian polity will not allow that. Through your many years of covering polls, you have met several political leaders — right from the time they were introduced to politics to when they were more mature in politics. What are the changes in Rahul Gandhi from when you met him in 2007 to now? In 2007, it was a two-hour-long meeting in which he spoke for an hour and 59 minutes. He didn't want to engage much despite the fact that he had just entered politics and it was a roomful of fairly experienced political watchers. The unfavourable impression was of being spoken down to. Over the years we found that he was much more interested in engaging and listening. We don't know how much of that is change and how much is based on feedback. There is, of course, no doubt that he has improved a lot as a campaigner from 2007. What about Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and her formal entry into the Congress? Will she be able to make a critical difference to the Congress's fortunes? I think the days are gone when you could just land and your charisma would work. That India is not there anymore. You also know how deeply entrenched caste equations in Uttar Pradesh are. To disturb them at this stage will be a very difficult thing to do. If I were to be asked on how she can make the biggest difference, it would be to get her to focus on one thing. Let's say she manages to be the combined Opposition candidate from Varanasi against Modi. Then you can focus that energy on one thing, but the idea of building the Congress so that it's a serious contender by April 2019 based on just charisma... that concept no longer exists. The deliverables from Priyanka should be adjusted in that way if she is to make an impact. You have described several tense meetings of your travel group with Prime Minister Modi and BJP president Amit Shah. Why is that? They have a belief that the entire media is 'liberal' and out to get them. It's a different situation from, say, 15 years ago, when the word liberal was not used so pejoratively. They really believe that the media is out to get them and it colours that interaction. But a lot of it also informs a narrative of Modi versus all, and if not Mr. Modi, then anarchy. How well do you think that will work in 2019? Rajiv Gandhi tried something similar in 1989 and that didn't work so well. It may work with some sections of the people, especially the middle class.

## A martyr's mother

(Gns. News) My cousin Mala Murthy, a martyr's mother, breathed her last recently. It takes courage to send one's son to war. Losing soldiers to a war is tragic enough, but how do you come to terms with many of our sons losing their lives in the proxy war of these times? Major Dinesh Raghuraman was one such courageous officer, who lost his life on October 2, 2007, combating insurgency in Kashmir. Mala and I grew up in the same household with the usual camaraderie and rivalry any siblings will have. She is three years older to me but we were in the same class due to some disruption earlier in her education. A natural linguist, she had mastered quite a few Indian languages. Her culinary skills would awaken even a dead palette. Her garden was an expression of her green fingers. Her hospitality and kindness were legendary among kith and kin. She made friends with ease in any neighbourhood her husband's transfer took her. At 24 and 27 years of age we were more like best friends than anything else and only six weeks apart in our pregnancies (my first, her second). She gave birth to a baby boy on April 6, 1978, a brother to her daughter. To our great admiration, Mala and her husband Murthy had motivated her daughter and son to serve our nation and humanity. Her daughter Aparna serves as the most-loved and well-respected gynaecologist in a military hospital. Dinesh Raghuraman joined the National Defence Academy in 1996 and was commissioned into the 19 Battalion of the Jat Regiment and later became a Major. Its not easy to find a life partner when you are constantly living in the shadow of death. He was fortunate to find his wife Latha, with whom he lived on and off as his duty would allow, for three years. In June 2007, Major Raghuraman conducted a successful operation, 'Op Narawar'. On October 2, 2007, he was assigned the task of launching an operation in Baramulla to flush out terrorists

hiding there. During the operation he crawled towards his fellow-officer who had been injured in hostile fire and moved him and two more injured soldiers to a safer area. Soon afterwards, he took several bullets from another front of gun battle opened by terrorists, and was seriously injured. He succumbed to his injuries in a Srinagar hospital. At that time his wife Latha was pregnant with their daughter Shrishti. Ever since Dinesh joined the NDA, Mala had kept pushing aside her fears and anxieties. She immersed herself into the lofty ideal that her son joined armed forces to make the world a better place. But the void created by the demise of her son never felt right in spite of all the felicitations regarding her son's courage. Her grief was heart-wrenching. Dinesh was the first thing in her mind when she woke up and the last thought whenever she fell



asleep. Major Raman was given the nation's highest peace-time gallantry award, the Ashoka Chakra, for his exceptional courage, camaraderie, fighting spirit and supreme sacrifice. Yet, he would never be healed and the void never vanished. Her culinary skills would awaken even a dead palette. Her garden was an expression of her green fingers. Her hospitality and kindness were legendary among kith and kin. She made friends with ease in any neighbourhood her husband's transfer took her. At

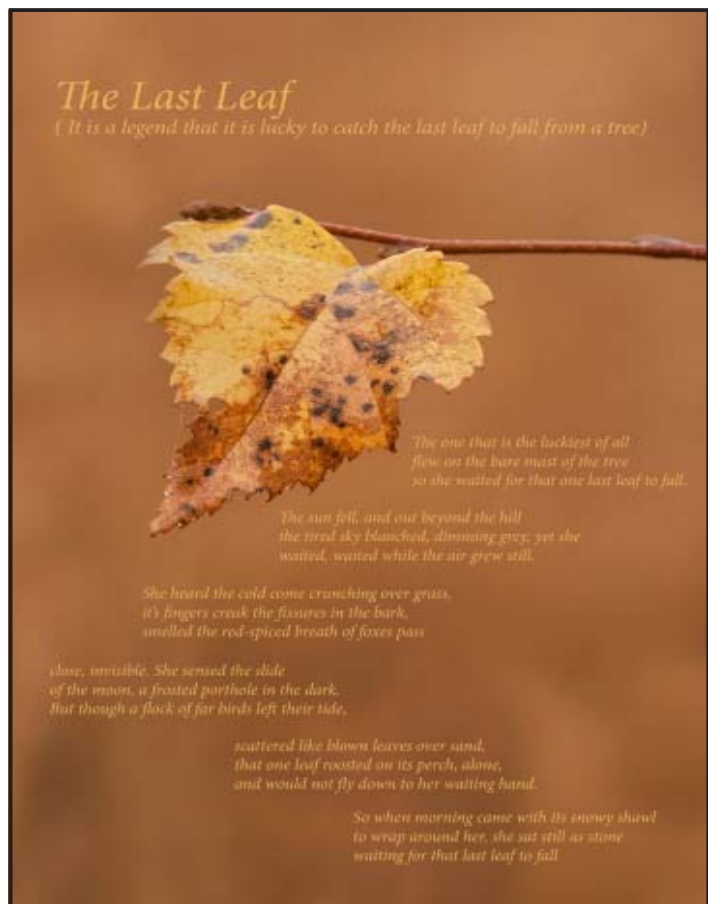
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hiding there. During the operation he crawled towards his fellow-officer who had been injured in hostile fire and moved him and two more injured soldiers to a safer area. Soon afterwards, he took several bullets from another front of gun battle opened by terrorists, and was seriously injured. He succumbed to his injuries in a Srinagar hospital. At 67, she was too young to die, but 12 years of inward grief took a toll. Her kindred spirit has now become part of our family folklore.

## Beyond the last leaf

(Gns. News) There is a delightful, highly sentimental story by O. Henry about a young artist in New York in the early part of the last century. Young Johnsy and her artist companion, Sue, lived in an apartment in Greenwich Village. Winter came and Johnsy caught pneumonia and she became critically ill. The doctor told Sue to be prepared for the worst. Outside their window there was a vine with attractive foliage, but it started shedding leaves one by one as summer passed through fall into winter. Finally, only one last leaf remained. Johnsy told Sue that when that leaf fell, her life would also go. A concerned elderly artist friend of the girls, hearing this story, climbed outside the window in the bitterly cold night and painted a life-like leaf at the spot from where the last leaf had just fallen. Came dawn, when Johnsy looked out of the window from her sick bed, lo and behold, the leaf was still there and it continued to be there on the following days. The girl regained her will to live and was fully recovered in a few days.



The Last Leaf  
(It is a legend that it is lucky to catch the last leaf to fall from a tree)

The one that is the backbone of all  
flow on the bare mast of the tree  
so she waited for that one last leaf to fall.

She sat still, and out beyond the hill  
the tired sky blazed, dimming grey, yet she  
waited, waited while the air grew still.

She heard the cold come cranking over grass,  
its fingers reach the flowers on the bark,  
smelled the red-spiced breath of frost pass.

There, invisible, she sensed the slide  
of the moon, a fringed porthole in the dark,  
but though a flock of far birds left their tale,

scattered like blown leaves over sand,  
that one leaf rooted on its perch, alone,  
and would not fly down to her waiting hand.

So when morning came with the sunny dawn  
to wipe around her, she sat still as stone,  
waiting for that last leaf to fall.

Far removed in time and far away from O. Henry's America, in the hot climes of Chennai, I also have my own leaf or, rather, many leaves, which I have adopted and whose growth I follow closely. Leaves are a weakness for me. Leaves in their variety of shapes and hues are things of beauty in their own right. In addition to being providers of shade and solace to weary eyes, they are the primary producers of food on earth and the most important agents of carbon fixation and a shield against global warming. During my morning walks along the beach I spend time watching the trees on the way. I observe new buds appear at the nodes and then bloom out into leaves. One particular tree, Cocoloba uvifera, the Sea Grape tree, has fascinated me. It is short, sprawling but sturdy, capable of withstanding the salt-laden sea wind and survive in the saline terrain. This tree is a wonder in its own right. When the sea bombards the beach vegetation with salt spray, the leaves of most other species literally get 'burnt' — but not the sea grape tree. The tree seems to drink the sea water and spit out the salt. The early morning dew drops sticking to the underside of the leaves are

strongly salty to taste. I have adopted one tree out of the many, as my own. I watch a new bud appear at a node which grows and in a few days it opens up bringing out a small honey-coloured leaf, thick, fleshy and shining. It is a slow process. It takes weeks, even months, for the leaf to grow to its full size, circular in shape, about half a foot or more in diameter. More leaves appear one by one, slowly. The leaf is sturdy. It may be a year or more before signs of old age set in, first as a browning at the edges, which spreads inwards. A concerned elderly artist friend of the girls, hearing this story, climbed outside the window in the bitterly cold night and painted a life-like leaf at the spot from where the last leaf had just fallen. Came dawn, when Johnsy looked out of the window from her sick bed, lo and behold, the leaf was still there and it continued to be there on the following days. The girl regained her will to live and was fully recovered in a few days. Far removed in time and far away from O. Henry's America, in the hot climes of Chennai, I also have my own leaf or, rather, many leaves, which I have adopted and whose growth

I follow closely. Leaves are a weakness for me. Leaves in their variety of shapes and hues are things of beauty in their own right. In addition to being providers of shade and solace to weary eyes, they are the primary producers of food on earth and the most important agents of carbon fixation and a shield against global warming. During my morning walks along the beach I spend time watching the trees on the way. I observe new buds appear at the nodes and then bloom out into leaves. Under the onslaught of wind, my leaf finally falls. Unlike O. Henry's Johnsy, I am not sentimental; I have not attached my life to that particular leaf. There are many more buds peeping out from the stem of my tree and there are many more trees. I adopt another tree, another bud, and life goes on. It will end for me when the time comes as it did for the leaf, but life, death and rebirth is a never ending process.

I had never seriously thought about the meaning of life and death. Being a born Hindu, I am familiar with the idea of punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam... but the trees have given a fresh clarity to the concept.

## That special bean in the air

(Gns. News) Avarekalu upma or uppittu is a seasonal breakfast dish which is made when the flat beans which is available in Karnataka, India. Of the wintry dishes in Bengaluru made from avarekalu a foggy Bengaluru morning in late-December that makes it tough for the pilot to land the aircraft, is the perfect welcome home for this die-hard Bengalee who has been globe-trotting, even if it is just for a fortnight. For, this is the season... No, not the Christmas season but the avarekalu season. The roiling morning mists that envelop Bengaluru and its surroundings is what is needed to draw out the sogadu from the avarekalu ripening in the fields and encourage the plant to coat the pods with an oil so they glisten when piled up for sale at the market. And it stands to reason that this is when the bean is at its most fragrant and tender best. Although there are some plebeians who would challenge the word sogadu (drawn from the Sanskrit sugandh) being associated with the robust smell of the avarekalu, the sogadu is what dis-

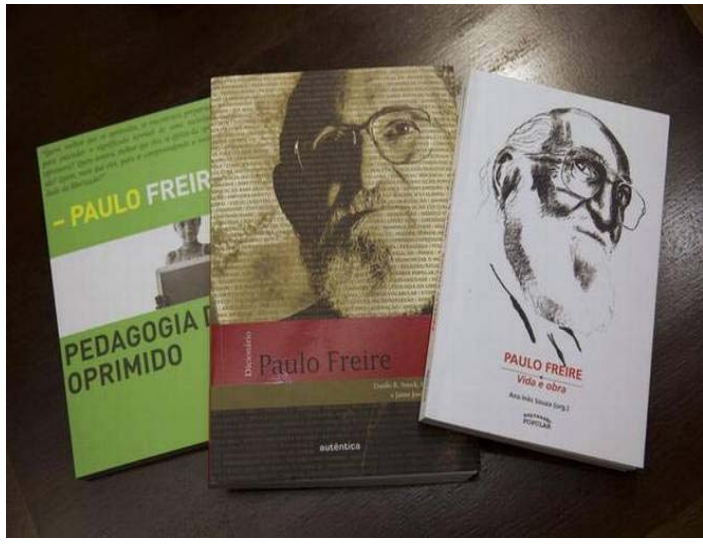
tinguishes the avarekalu from any other bean, and the word carries with it so many fond memories of dishes you have eaten that it can make the heart sing and the mouth water. Let it be known that in this city when the sogadu permeates the air and lingers on the fingertips of everyone because avarekalu-shelling is a family activity; anticipation for the next meal always reaches a fevered pitch. The crackles, hisses, pounding, grinding and whistling coming out of the kitchen can give you a clue to what is cooking, but nothing compares to the first taste of biting into the bean, buttery smooth and melt-in-the-mouth, or offering the slightest resistance before it gives. It all depends of what the dish requires, with the only accepted constant being that for every bite you take you should encounter at least one bean. A Bengalee believes in living the avarekalu season to the fullest, although it is passed off as a joke. It is most likely that except for the coffee, everything that comes out of the home kitchen in this season is bound to be made of

avarekalu. The list of dishes that can be encouraged to incorporate and be enhanced by the avarekalu from breakfast to dinner is delightful. Uppittu, shavige, pongal, akki roti, kadubu, nuchchurundai usli, saaru, huli, saagu, chitrana, bisibelebath, to name a few. And of course there is the ever-popular avarekalu mixture, sometimes enhanced with peanuts, cashew or dried coconut (although I believe it does just fine on its own) deserves special mention. Spicy, crunchy and flavourful, it is everyone's favourite seasonal guilty pleasure. The city now boasts of an avarekalu mela that goes overboard selling everything made of avarekalu including the shock Avarekalu Manchurian. It is, however, the home kitchens that are the true custodian of dishes that enmesh tradition and flavour. From the moment of the peeling and measuring the bean while the water is kept on the boil, ready to accept the beans so none of its flavour is lost while making the fluffy white akkithari uppittu studded with green

avarekalu; to the art of segregating the beans for each dish, the medium sized beans for the uppittu to the more mature beans that will need to be further skinned for the hitkida avarekalu saaru; when each family has its traditions; when it comes to avarekalu and it goes without saying special flavours too. For a Bengalee to think you have missed a part of this short-lived season and been deprived of all the dishes coming out of various kitchens; friends, family, colleagues and neighbours is almost tragic. Heading home, you get to delight in the mist blurred landscape, to sniff the air for the sogadu and to anticipate the spicy, gingery avarekalu uppittu garnished with slender curls of coconut and crisp curly leaves that is sure to be waiting for you. This I must admit, was not the standard 45-minute early morning ride home from the airport but a gastronomic dream filled with anticipation, sogadu and all things avarekalu.



## Brazil education overhaul aims at ousting 'Marxist ideology'



(Gns. News) President Jair Bolsonaro is taking his anti-Leftist ideological war to Brazil's classrooms and universities, causing angst among teachers and education officials who say the government wants to fight an enemy that doesn't exist. Bolsonaro and top officials have announced plans to revise textbooks to excise references to feminism, homosexuality and violence against women, say the military will take over some public schools and frequently bash Paulo Freire, one of Brazil's most famous educators, whose ideas had worldwide influence. "One of the goals to get Brazil out of the worst positions in international education rankings is to combat the Marxist rubbish that has spread in educational institutions," Bolsonaro tweeted on the eve of his inauguration. While students may not yet find many differences as they return to school this month, changes are afoot. "We are still waiting to see how, in practice, all this is going to turn out," said Nilton Brandao, president of one of Brazil's largest teachers' unions, PROIFES Federacao. "Right now, it does not make any sense." For the government, the ideological battle begins with the removal of Freire's legacy in schools, which Bolsonaro and other conservatives say turns students into "political militants." Freire, who died in 1997, was one of the founders of critical pedagogy. Conservatives contend Freire's method encourages students to challenge traditional values such as family and the church. A socialist, Freire was briefly imprisoned during the 1964-1985 military dictatorship that Bolsonaro has repeatedly praised. On the campaign trail, Bolsonaro said he wanted to "enter the Education Ministry with a flamethrower to remove Paulo Freire." Bolsonaro and his education minister appear to be looking for inspiration in philosophers like Olavo de Carvalho, a Brazilian who lives in the U.S. and is known for his anti-globalism and anti-socialist views. While Freire believed in the state's mission to educate the Brazilian people, including poor rural farmers and the illiterate, de Carvalho advocates reducing the state's role in education, favoring private or religious schools. "The government does not have to educate anyone; it is the society that has to educate itself," de Carvalho said last year during a talk about education on his YouTube channel. He added that proposals "based on the idea that the federal government is the great educator I am going to fight to the death." After Bolsonaro took office Jan. 1, the Education Ministry dismantled its diversity department and published a new set of guidelines for textbook publishers that eliminated references to topics such as violence against women and sexism. Receiving an outpouring of criticism, officials backtracked on the revised texts, saying the new guidelines had been written by the previous administration and published by mistake. Even so, Education Minister Ricardo Velez Rodriguez vowed in his inaugural speech to end the "aggressive promotion of the gender ideology." Velez instead defended what he called traditional values, such as family, church, school and the nation, which he said were threatened by a "crazy globalist wave." Bolsonaro has said he would review the content of Brazil's national high school exam to rid it of any questions on gender or LGBT movements. He made the announcement in a YouTube video after seeing a question from last year's exam on a "secret dialect used by gays and transvestites," called Pajuba. The Pajuba dialect mixes Portuguese and West African languages and is mostly used in Afro-Brazilian religions but has also been adopted by the Brazilian LGBT community. "Don't worry, there won't be any more questions like this," Bolsonaro said. After his inauguration, Velez told the newspaper Folha de S. Paulo that his office will encourage municipalities interested in letting their schools be run by the military or the police. Brazil has 13 military-run schools, which are aimed at educating children of soldiers but also accept some students based on merit. The military is the most respected institution in the country and its schools have a better reputation than many public schools. "We are still waiting to see how, in practice, all this is going to turn out," said Nilton Brandao, president of one of Brazil's largest teachers' unions, PROIFES Federacao. "Right now, it does not make any sense." For the government, the ideological battle begins with the removal of Freire's legacy in schools, which Bolsonaro and other conservatives say turns students into "political militants." Freire, who died in 1997, was one of the founders of critical pedagogy. Conservatives contend Freire's method encourages students to challenge traditional values such as family and the church. A socialist, Freire was briefly imprisoned during the 1964-1985 military dictatorship that Bolsonaro has repeatedly praised. On the campaign trail, Bolsonaro said he wanted to "enter the Education Ministry with a flamethrower to remove Paulo Freire." Bolsonaro and his education minister appear to be looking for inspiration in philosophers like Olavo de Carvalho, a Brazilian who lives in the U.S. and is known for his anti-globalism and anti-socialist views. While Freire believed in the state's mission to educate the Brazilian people, including poor rural farmers and the illiterate, de Carvalho advocates reducing the state's role in education, favoring private or religious schools. The military is also sometimes called in to co-run public schools and bring back order. Last year, 39.5 million students attended a public school, while private institutions, which can cost several thousand dollars a month, served 9 million. Opponents say the selective admission process of military schools would end up being discriminatory in impoverished areas. In general, critics say the administration is focused on the wrong things. Claudia Costin, director of Brazil's Center for Excellence and Innovation in Education Policies, a think tank based in Rio de Janeiro, said efforts should focus on improving training and salaries for teachers, making the entrance exam for teachers tougher and building a common syllabus for schools across the country. The government "complains about indoctrination at school," Costin said. "But it is not with laws that you solve these things." Brazil ranked 63rd out of the 72 countries and regions in the 2015 Program for International Student Assessment, conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. According to the group, Brazil has as one of the largest shares of adults without secondary education. Schools are overcrowded, teacher salaries and low and school buildings are often crumbling. More than 5,800 schools had no water supply in 2017, nearly 5,000 had no electricity and 8,400 had no sewage, according to government figures. Many Brazilians don't appear convinced by Bolsonaro's plans. In a poll published Jan. 8, 71 percent of those surveyed said politics should be discussed at school and 54 percent thought it was fine to discuss sexual education inside the classroom. The poll, however, indicated that the new administration's conservative views played well with evangelicals, a powerful voter base for Bolsonaro during the campaign. Fifty-nine percent of evangelicals said they did not approve of sexual education being discussed at school. The Datafolha poll was based on 2,077 interviews carried out Dec. 18 and Dec. 19, with a margin of error of two percentage points. Caua dos Santos Borges, a 15-year-old public school student in Rio de Janeiro, said that in her experience teachers rarely spoke about politics in the classroom and gender had never felt like a core area of the curriculum. "Once, a student asked the teacher if he supported Bolsonaro, but the teacher didn't respond and changed the subject," dos Santos Borges said.

## Pak SC clips wings of armed forces, ISI; says stay away from politics, act within law



(Gns. News) Pakistan's Supreme Court on Wednesday prohibited members of the armed forces from engaging in political activities and directed state agencies like the ISI to operate within the law as it ordered the government to act against those propagating "hated, extremism and terrorism". The order by a two-member bench of the apex court came while delivering a verdict on the 2017 Faizabad sit-in by the hardline Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and other smaller groups. "We direct the federal and provincial governments to monitor those advocating hate, extremism and terrorism and prosecute the perpetrators in accordance with the law," the Bench comprising Justice Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Mushir Alam ruled. The court also directed all government agencies and departments, including those run by the armylike Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), to operate within the limits defined by the law. The court ordered that members of the Armed Forces were prohibited from engaging in any kind of political activity, which includes supporting a party, faction or individual. "The government of Pakistan through the Ministry of Defence and the respective Chiefs of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force are directed to initiate action against the personnel under their command who are found to have violated

their oath," the court said. Several experts were of the view that Prime Minister Imran Khan was supported by the country's powerful army in the last year's general election. Pakistan's powerful military has ruled the country through various coups for nearly half of the country's history since independence in 1947. The military plays an important role in the country's decision making. The apex court also outlawed religious edicts called fatwas that aimed to harm others. "A person issuing an edict or fatwa, which harms another or puts another in harm's way, must be criminally prosecuted under the Pakistan Penal Code, the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 and/or the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016," the court ruled. The court upheld that subject to reasonable restrictions imposed by law, citizens have the right to form and to be members of political parties. They can also assemble for peaceful protest. The order by a two-member bench of the apex court came while delivering a verdict on the 2017 Faizabad sit-in by the hardline Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and other smaller groups. "We direct the federal and provincial governments to monitor those advocating hate, extremism and terrorism and prosecute the perpetrators in accordance with the law," the Bench comprising Justice Qazi Faez Isa

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## Millions in cryptocurrencies frozen in Canada after only person who had password dies in India

(Gns. News) About C\$180 million (\$137.21 million) in cryptocurrencies have been frozen in the user accounts of Canadian digital platform Quadriga after the founder, the only person with the password to gain access, died suddenly in December. Gerald Cotten died aged 30 from complications with Crohn's disease while volunteering at an orphanage in India, according to the Facebook page of Quadriga CX, which announced his death on Jan. 14. The platform, which allows the trading of Bitcoin, Litecoin and Ethereum, filed for creditor protection in the Nova Scotia Supreme Court last week. Quadriga has 363,000 registered users and owes a total of C\$250 million to 115,000 affected users, according to an affidavit filed by Cotten's widow Jennifer Robertson on behalf of the company. Ms. Robertson said in the affidavit that Cotten's main computer contained a "cold wallet" of cryptocurrencies, which is only accessible physically and not online, and his death left "in excess of C\$180 million of coins in cold storage." Ms. Robertson said she was not involved in Cotten's business while he was alive and did not know the password or recovery key. "Despite repeated and diligent searches, I have not been able to find them written down anywhere," she said. Ms. Robertson said that she has consulted an expert who has had "limited success in recovering a few coins and some information" from Cotten's other computer and cell phones, but the majority remains untouched on his main computer. Quadriga's troubles highlight the unique challenges of cryptocurrencies. Dean Skurka, vice president of rival platform Bitbuy.ca, said in an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. "This really highlights the need for the government to take action and regulate cryptocurrency exchanges," Mr. Skurka said. Ms. Robertson said in her affidavit she has received online threats and "slanderous comments", including questions about the nature of Cotten's death, and whether he is really dead. Meanwhile, "This really highlights the need for the government to take action and regulate cryptocurrency exchanges," Mr. Skurka said. Ms. Robertson said in her affidavit she has received online threats and "slanderous comments", Halifax



judge Michael Wood on Tuesday ordered a 30-day stay that precludes filing of claims against Quadriga. Ernst & Young has been appointed the company's third-party monitor,

to help manage Quadriga's finances during the process. Lawyer Maurice Chiasson told the court the company wants time to find the C\$250 million it owes users. According to court fil-

ings the company is considering selling its platforms to cover its debts. The wallet in question was "cold," which means it was not connected to the internet so as to prevent hacking.

## 7,324 officials will face action, DGP tells court

(Gns. News) No one would have expected that the hearing of a civil appeal filed by a knitting company in the Madras High Court would lead to the unearthing of 2.14 lakh criminal cases in the State that were closed abruptly between 2009 and 2014 for non-filing of final reports by the police and another 1.72 lakh cases pending before trial courts without being taken on file. After Justice M.V. Muralidaran smelt a rat and dug out the details, the Home Secretary and the Director-General of Police told the court on Tuesday that they had taken steps to initiate disciplinary action against the investigating officers concerned by issuing show cause notices to 7,324 officials, who failed to file final reports within the statutory period. The court was also told that the DGP had issued a circular to all his subordinate officials on January 30 listing steps to be taken to streamline the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases from scratch to end. After recording the submissions made by Public Prosecutor A. Natarajan, the judge reserved his verdict. It was on December 18 that Justice Muralidaran stumbled upon a

copy of a communication between the Inspector of the Uthukuli police station in Tirupur district and the jurisdictional judicial magistrate relating to 87 criminal cases pertaining to the police station alone having been closed between 2006 and 2014 for non-filing of final reports on time. The communication was produced before the judge when he was hearing a civil appeal related to compensation awarded under the Workmen's Compensation Act and wanted to know the status of a police complaint lodged by the victim's brother regarding alleged wrong treatment after he suffered injuries at his workplace. Shocked to learn that 87 cases pertaining to just one police station were closed due to non-filing of charge sheets on time, the judge called for reports from all criminal courts across the State. The judge found that 2,14,105 cases had been closed in Tamil Nadu, besides 796 cases in Puducherry, between 2009 and 2014 for want of charge sheets. The reports submitted by the lower courts to the High Court's Registrar General C. Kumarappan also revealed that the highest number of 28,573 cases had been closed in

a short span of six years in Kancheepuram district. It was followed by 26,351 cases closed in Madurai; 13,836 in Chennai; 11,190 cases in Villupuram and 10,877 in Tiruchi. Cumulative figures for the six years in other districts were less than 10,000 with Nagapattinam recording 9,761 cases, Vellore - 9,540 cases; Thoothukudi - 8,441; Salem - 8,355; Tiruvannamalai - 8,295 and so on. The judge came down heavily on the police for allowing such closures. In response, an affidavit was filed in the court on Tuesday on behalf of the Home Secretary as well as Director General of Police stating that instructions have been issued to all Commissioners of Police, Superintendents of Police and others to nominate an officer in the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police to monitor investigations and ensure filing of final reports. Further stating that 1,72,602 cases were pending in various trial courts since 2010 without being taken on file, the two officials told the High Court that the problem could be solved if every court maintained a register for entering the dates on which final reports were filed.

## 6 new schemes, sops for ryots, women in interim Budget

**Please-all**


REVENUE	
Receipts	Expenditure
₹1,78,269.86 crore	₹1,80,369.33 crore

**REVENUE RECEIPTS**

- Share of Central taxes ₹3,630.3 cr.
- State taxes ₹75,438 cr.
- Interest receipts ₹283.2 cr.
- Other non-tax revenue ₹66,188.4 cr.

**REVENUE EXPENDITURE**

- Development expenditure ₹1,31,907.3 cr.
- Debt servicing ₹18,529.7 cr.
- Tax collection charges ₹1,343.1 cr.
- Administrative charges ₹8,975.4 cr.
- Other expenditure ₹19,613.9 cr.



**Our government has been quite conscious of the increasing inequalities in society. Therefore, we have deliberately opted for a welfare-oriented developmental agenda that promotes inclusive development.**

YANAMALA RAMAKRISHNU, Finance Minister

(Gns. News) Ahead of the upcoming general elections, the State government on Tuesday showered sops on the farming community, the women and the entrepreneurs in the vote-on-account Budget presented for 2019-20 with an outlay of ₹2.26 lakh crore. Deviating from the convention followed in the vote-on-account budget, it announced six new major schemes including Annadatha sukhibhava. It is estimated that the new schemes would require ₹6,200 crore. Presenting the Budget in the Assembly, Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnu said, "Our government has been quite conscious of the increasing inequalities in society. Therefore, we have deliberately opted for a welfare-oriented developmental agenda that promotes inclusive development." A step in that direction, 'Annadatha sukhibhava', a scheme to give economic support to the farmers with an allocation of ₹5,000 crore, was being launched. Land acquisition for house sites, incentives for industrial promotion, infrastructure facilities in urban local bodies etc top the agenda, he said. During his 98-minute speech, the Finance Minister said, "To empower the Self-Help Groups (SHGs), the government would give assistance of ₹10,000 to each member in three spells to benefit 93.81 lakh people." The revenue expenditure was estimated at ₹29,596.53 crore including ₹8,994 crore towards principal repayment of public debt. The revenue deficit would be around ₹2,099 crore, while the fiscal deficit ₹32,390.68 crore, he said. In his 11th Budget and the last of the present government, Mr. Ramakrishnu said the government proposed to increase the allocations for important schemes including the Andhra Pradesh Market Intervention Scheme, farm mechanisation, livestock insurance, fodder and feed development, promotion of horticulture activities and development of fisheries. The Budget for these schemes had been increased to ₹1,924 from ₹1,140.68 in 2018-19. The welfare pensions would require ₹12,819 crore during next fiscal as against ₹5,012 crore in

2017-18. Along with this, the government had decided to increase the Chandranna Yuva Nistam pension to ₹2,000. "Our government has been working not only for the people who voted for us and who did not vote for us but also for the people who could not have voted for anyone — our children and grandchildren." It is estimated that the new schemes would require ₹6,200 crore. Presenting the Budget in the Assembly, Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnu said, "Our government has been quite conscious of the increasing inequalities in society. Therefore, we have deliberately opted for a welfare-oriented developmental agenda that promotes inclusive development." A step in that direction, 'Annadatha sukhibhava', a scheme to give economic support to the farmers with an allocation of ₹5,000 crore, was being launched. Land acquisition for house sites, incentives for industrial promotion, infrastructure facilities in urban local bodies etc top the agenda, he said. During his 98-minute speech, the Finance Minister said, "To empower the Self-Help Groups (SHGs), the government would give assistance of ₹10,000 to each member in three spells to benefit 93.81 lakh people." The revenue expenditure was estimated at ₹29,596.53 crore including ₹8,994 crore towards principal repayment of public debt. The revenue deficit would be around ₹2,099 crore, while the fiscal deficit ₹32,390.68 crore, he said. In his 11th Budget and the last of the present government, Mr. Ramakrishnu said the government proposed to increase the allocations for important schemes including the Andhra Pradesh Market Intervention Scheme, farm mechanisation, livestock insurance, fodder and feed development, promotion of horticulture activities and development of fisheries. The Budget for these schemes had been increased to ₹1,924 from ₹1,140.68 in 2018-19. The welfare pensions would require ₹12,819 crore during next fiscal as against ₹5,012 crore in





