

HYDERABAD

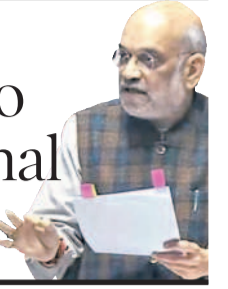
Do not panic, say doctors on new Covid-19 sub-variant **page 3**

STATE

Soon, avail new power connections in just three days **page 5**

NATION

LS passes 3 Bills to replace old criminal laws **page 7**



State's finances under scanner

FINANCE MINISTER PRESENTS WHITE PAPER ON TS' FISCAL STATUS, SAYS OUTSTANDING DEBT AT Rs 6,71,757 CR

BRS HITS BACK SAYING IT'S A BLATANT ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY STATE AS DEBT-RIDDEN, BANKRUPT

SAYS TELANGANA'S GROSS STATE DOMESTIC PRODUCT INCREASED BY 159.6% IN LAST NINE FISCALS

No money even to meet daily expenses: Bhatti

'Ploy to back out of 6 guarantees'

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

Presenting a grim picture of the State's fiscal status with an estimated outstanding debt of Rs 6,71,757 crore by the end of the current financial year, the Congress government on Wednesday declared that Telangana was staring at a debt crisis.

Presenting a 42-page white paper on Telangana's finances during a short discussion in the Assembly on Wednesday, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said the total debt of Telangana was Rs 72,658 crore in 2014-15. Telangana, which was a revenue surplus State in 2014 and has one of the fastest growing economies in the country, now had no money even to meet daily expenditure, he said.

Blaming the financial indiscipline by the previous government during the last 10 years for this fiscal stress, he said due to the increased fiscal stress, the State had to depend on the ways and means of advances from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on a daily basis.

The white paper was aimed at placing before people facts relating to the financial position of the State as inherited by the current government, he said, adding



Telangana is staring at a debt crisis... Due to the increased fiscal stress, the State has to depend on the ways and means of advances from the RBI on a daily basis... The white paper is aimed at placing facts before people

— MALLU BHATTI VIKRAMARKA, Finance Minister

that the objective was to foster public debate.

In the white paper, Vikramarka said the total outstanding debt of Telangana was Rs 6,71,757 crore and government borrowings were Rs 3,89,673 crore under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act as per the Budget estimates of 2023-24. Government-guaranteed loans raised by Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) but are serviced by the govern-

ment were Rs 1,27,208 crore. Government-guaranteed loans raised by them were Rs 95,462 crore, while non-guaranteed loans raised and serviced by SPVs/corporations/institutions were Rs 59,414 crore.

"In the last 10 years, the total debt of the State and SPVs has gone up to Rs 6,71,757 crore from Rs 72,658 crore in 2014-15," the white paper stated. (SEE PAGE 2)

(RELATED REPORTS PAGE 5)

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

BRS MLA T Harish Rao on Wednesday called the white paper on the State's finances tabled by the government in the Assembly a blatant attempt to project the State, which had a healthy and robust growth history, as a debt-ridden and bankrupt entity.

Harish, who was Finance Minister in the previous government, feared that the situation could be used to set the stage for the evasion of the six guarantees given by the Congress to the people in the State.

Initiating the debate on the white paper, Harish sounded a caution to the State government against its bid to portray Telangana as a poor State for the sake of political gains, stating that



The financial status of a State is not measured in terms of money stacked in cupboards. The inflow and outflow of rupees from the treasury is a continuous process — HARISH RAO, BRS MLA

this would impact the interests of the State.

Urging the government to pay attention to the need to further enhance the reputa-

tion and leverage of the State, he made it clear that the repercussions of showcasing the State adversely would be serious. (SEE PAGE 2)

Harish dares govt to probe Kaleshwaram

HYDERABAD: Former Minister T Harish Rao on Wednesday dared the State government to order a probe into the irregularities alleged by the Congress in the construction of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project. Taking part in the debate over the white paper on the State's finances, he made a strong case for the multi-stage lift irrigation scheme built to fulfil the promise of water for parched lands in the State. (SEE PAGE 2)

Assets created in last 10 yrs, says BRS

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

The BRS on Wednesday released a detailed 'assets' report explaining all the assets accumulated and the progress achieved in Telangana under the leadership of former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao.

The party released the 51-slide report — after it was

denied permission for a PowerPoint presentation in the Assembly — to counter the government's white paper on the State finances.

In the document, the BRS asserted that it had augmented assets, not debts, over the last 10 years, emphasising a substantial increase in government assets. The report outlined key achievements across vari-

ous sectors, including power, infrastructure, agriculture and economy, among others.

The report pointed out that Telangana's Gross State Domestic Product increased by 159.6 per cent in the last nine fiscals years from Rs 5,05,849 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 13,13,391 crore in 2022-23 as against the national Gross Domestic Product growth

rate of 118.5 per cent. "After the achievement of Telangana, to every rupee borrowed, assets worth Rs 1,000 were created. The per capita income has increased by 151.7 per cent. Tax collections have increased by 161 per cent. Revenue from registrations has increased by 406%, paddy production by 150% and cotton by 50%," it said. (SEE PAGE 2)

Murmu all praise for Ikat weavers



President Droupadi Murmu during her visit to a weavers' cluster in Pochampally on Wednesday.

STATE BUREAU
Yadadri-Bhongir

Stating that the art of weaving was part of the country's culture and tradition, President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday appreciated the Pochampally Ikat handloom weavers for passing on the art of weaving to the

future generations and setting new trends in fashion design. Interacting with award-winning weavers at Pochampally, she said the handloom sector was providing employment to 32 lakh families, and products and designs of TS weavers earned recognition at the global level. (SEE PAGE 2)

White paper raises more questions than answers

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

The release of the Telangana government's white paper on the State's finances has triggered multiple internal debates within the Congress, raising questions about the strategic wisdom behind the move.

From the Opposition benches to within the party itself, the decision to open up the government's financial workings for public scrutiny has prompted criticism.

One of the key points of contention revolves around the perceived lack of coordination within the State government. The absence of a unified front was glaringly evident when the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Min-

Absence of unified front evident when CM, Dy CM, others offer disparate responses to queries posed by Oppn

ister and other Ministers offered disparate responses to queries posed by the Opposition.

The contradictory statements — from Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka that the State economy was destroyed and from Legislative Affairs Minister D Sridhar Babu that the State was not bankrupt and that no State could progress without obtaining loans — only added fuel to the fire.

In an ironic twist, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy asserted that the white paper was not intended for political criticism or to defame anyone in particular, but only to present facts to the people.

Yet the internal disconnect and conflicting statements seemed to suggest otherwise.

Adding to the woes, the Congress found itself on the wrong foot on several occasions. Deviating from established practices, the State government tabled the white paper in the House but did not initiate the discussion. Instead, the Speaker asked the Opposition to start the discussion. (SEE PAGE 2)

(WHITE PAPER NOT MEANT TO INSULT ANYONE: CM PAGE 4)

Arjuna Award for Hussamuddin, Esha

SPORTS BUREAU
Hyderabad

Telangana star shooter Esha Singh and Nizamabad boxer Mohammad Hussamuddin have been selected for the prestigious Arjuna Award by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports on Wednesday.

Esha recently scripted history by winning four medals at the 2022 Asian Games at Hangzhou. She won gold in the 25-m pis-



AWARDS WILL BE CONFERRED BY PRESIDENT MURMU AT RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN ON JANUARY 9

tol team event and individual silver in the same event. She also clinched silver in the 10-m air pistol team event and individual category. The 18-year-old Esha became the youngest

athlete from the State to be selected for the honours. She also received the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar earlier. Esha won gold at the 2023 World Championships in

10-m air pistol mixed team and 25-m pistol team events. She also emerged as world champion in the junior World Championships by winning gold.

Meanwhile, 29-year-old boxer Hussamuddin is a two-time bronze medal winner from the Commonwealth Games in 2018 at Gold Coast and in Birmingham in 2022. He also won bronze at the World Championships in 2023 and Asian Championships in 2022.

Khel Ratna for Satwik, Chirag

Badminton men's doubles pair Satwik-sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have been selected for the prestigious Khel Ratna honour. Chirag and Satwik are Asian Games gold medalists, World Championships bronze winners and Commonwealth Games silver medallists. (REPORTS PAGE 10)

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