



**STATE**

Rajgopal's *khhabardar* remark triggers war of words **page 3**

**NATION**



Parliament passes new Telecom Bill **page 5**

**WORLD**

15 people killed in mass shooting at Prague university **page 7**

## Judicial probe into three power deals: CM

Says inquiry will look into Chhattisgarh PPA, Bhadradri, Yadadri power plants

STATE BUREAU  
HYDERABAD

Accepting the Bharat Rashtra Samithi's challenge, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Thursday said a judicial inquiry will be ordered into the power purchase agreement with Chhattisgarh, besides into the Bhadradri and Yadadri thermal power plants constructed by the BRS government.

He announced this in the Assembly after Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka tabled a white paper on the Telangana power sector. Amidst a high-octane war of words during a short discussion on the white paper, the Chief Minister said his government was also prepared to constitute an all-party fact-finding committee to look into the 24-hour free power supply claims of the BRS regime. Former Energy Minister G Jagadish Reddy will also be a member of the committee, he said.

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said the BRS government supplied power for only nine-ten hours a day as against the 24 hours claimed by the party leaders. He also alleged that there was a scam in the Yadadri power plant and that the contract was handed over to BHEL on a nomination basis without floating tenders. The former Energy Minister sprang to his feet and said it was clearly mentioned in the report that the BRS government provided free power to ryots on average of 19 hours a day. (SEE PAGES 2, 4)

### Heated exchange

THE 30-PAGE WHITE PAPER ON THE FINANCIAL HEALTH OF THE POWER SECTOR TABLED IN THE ASSEMBLY TRIGGERED A WAR OF WORDS IN THE HOUSE

**REVANTH ALLEGES**

- Irregularities in power purchase agreements with Chhattisgarh caused financial burden of **Rs 1,362 cr** on State exchequer
- Large-scale corruption in construction of Bhadradri, Yadadri thermal power plants
- Agreement signed with outdated company for Yadadri plant — expired sub-critical technology used, causing huge losses



**JAGADISH COUNTERS**



- Power purchase agreement with Chhattisgarh government and construction agreements with BHEL (public sector company) was to prevent power crisis. There is no scope for irregularities between two governments or a PSU
- Before executing Yadadri project works, a technical committee was constituted and only after a feasibility report was submitted, the project was taken forward
- Permission obtained from Union Ministry of Power as well
- According to instructions, if the project could be completed before **March 31, 2017**, it could be taken up
- Government's white paper mentions that BRS govt provided free power to farmers on average of **19.22 hours per day**

**VENKAT REDDY ALLEGES**

- Power supplied for only 9-10 hrs a day during BRS regime against **24 hrs** power supply claimed
- Thousands of crores worth of corruption in Yadadri power plant, contracts handed over to BHEL on nomination basis

### BRS, AIMIM stage walkout

**HYDERABAD:** Expressing dissatisfaction over the reply given by Energy Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on their queries on the power sector, the BRS and AIMIM staged a walkout from the House. MIM Floor Leader Akbaruddin Owaisi wanted know why there were differences in total debts of discoms. (REPORT PAGE 3)

## TS discoms in debt trap: Govt

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

Tabling its second white paper in the Assembly, the Telangana government on Thursday said the financial health of State-run power utilities was alarming, with discoms' debts pegged at Rs 81,516 crore and accumulated losses amounting to Rs 62,461 crore as of October 31.

Tabling the 30-page white paper on the financial health of the power sector in the Assembly, Deputy Chief

Minister and Energy Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said of the total debts incurred by the power sector, Rs 30,406 crore was borrowed as working capital primarily to pay power charges to the generators. Despite this, generation and transmission dues worth Rs 28,673 crore remain to be paid by discoms, he said.

According to the white paper, the difficulty faced by discoms in paying power purchase bills was aggravated by the default of the

government in paying power bills of its own departments, which mounted to Rs 28,842 crore. Of this, the amount due from lift irrigation projects alone was Rs 14,193 crore, while the government's default in paying committed true-up charges of Rs 14,928 crore had further contributed to the deterioration of discoms' finances. In these circumstances, merely to keep the power supply going, discoms were resorting to regular borrowings. (SEE PAGE 2)

## 5 jawans killed in Poonch attack

Terrorists ambush Army vehicles



An Army vehicle after being ambushed by terrorists in Poonch district on Thursday. — Photo: PTI

POONCH/JAMMU

Five soldiers were killed and two injured when heavily armed terrorists ambushed two Army vehicles in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Thursday, officials said.

The bodies of two of the slain soldiers were mutilated, they said. The vehicles carrying the personnel to the site of a cordon-and-search operation came under attack at a blind curve

at Dhatyar Morh between Dhera Ki Gali and Buzliuz under the jurisdiction of the Surankote police station around 3.45 pm.

The People's Anti-Fascist Front, an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba, claimed responsibility for the ambush. As additional forces were moving to the site, the ultras fired upon an Army truck and Gypsy. The troops swiftly responded to the attack, a defence spokesperson said. PTI

## 3 more MPs suspended

NEW DELHI

Three more Opposition members were suspended from Lok Sabha on Thursday, taking the total number of suspensions from the Lower House of Parliament to a record 100.

With this, the total number of MPs suspended for unruly behaviour from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha stands at an unprecedented 146 since December 14.

In Lok Sabha, while 97 MPs were suspended for the remainder of the ses-

sion, three were removed from the services of the House pending a report of the House Privileges Committee. Removal from the services of the House is the official term used for suspension. Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die on Thursday, a day ahead of schedule.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi moved a motion for the suspension of DK Suresh, Deepak Bajaj and Nakul Nath for unruly behaviour. (SEE PAGES 2, 5)

## Surge in Covid-19 cases likely

M SAI GOPAL  
Hyderabad

There are clear indications that the JN.1 subtype of the BA.2.86 Omicron variant will give rise to a new wave of Covid infections across India in the coming weeks.

The surge, however, will remain way smaller compared to the previous Covid waves over the last two years. Nevertheless, Covid virus trackers have urged people to exercise caution to ensure the spread of infections is minimised. Early signs of Covid infections due to JN.1 indicate that the majority of the positive

cases will have mild symptoms, requiring minimal hospitalisation, public health experts and epidemiologists said.

The last time the country witnessed a major surge in Covid infections was in April due to the XB.1.16 variant, dubbed as Arcturus, which successfully replaced the other variants that were in circulation. Public health experts and virologists, who believe that a new surge of infections will happen across the country, say that healthy individuals are most likely to experience cold-like symptoms from JN.1 infection. (SEE PAGE 2)

## PM hails new criminal justice Bills

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday hailed the passage of three criminal justice Bills, which will replace as many colonial-era acts, as a watershed moment in India's history, and said it marked the beginning of a new era with laws centered on public service and welfare.

"Through them, we have also bid goodbye to the outdated sections on sedition," he said on X after Parliament gave its nod to Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam. PTI

## Why no white paper on irrigation?

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

The Telangana government's decision to drop the idea of presenting another white paper on the irrigation sector has led to speculations about the ruling Congress being ill at ease over the whole exercise, as the ploy was actually working out in favour of its rival — the Bharat Rashtra Samithi.

There was widespread expectation about another white paper on irrigation being presented in the Assembly on Friday, but unexpectedly, the House was adjourned sine die on Thursday evening after the conclusion of a short discussion on the white paper on

the power sector. Earlier in the day, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy convened a high-level meeting on irrigation and agriculture sectors.

An official release later stated that the Chief Minister sought details on the construction of irrigation projects, costs of construction and creation of new ayacut from 1956 to 2014 and later from 2014 to 2023. But what surprised everyone was the warning of stringent action against officials if they hid any project details.

Senior officials, sources said, were taken aback at the CM's tone and tenor. It was not just the warning but it was also mentioned in the press release, baffling officials and political observers

alike, though it was stated that the Chief Minister wanted transparency in every issue to be communicated to the people.

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

Congress sources were unanimous in conceding that on Wednesday, coordination among the Ministers was lacking during the debate on the white paper on the State's finances. Though there was some improvement in this aspect on Thursday, the general observation was that the BRS managed to effectively counter the onslaught of the treasury benches, especially while highlighting the average power supply being

pegged at 19.22 hours a day as mentioned in the white paper. The treasury benches had indeed mounted a relentless attack on the BRS, but Revanth Reddy's comments that the AIMIM had favoured the BRS in elections deflected the focus with AIMIM Floor Leader Akbaruddin Owaisi launching a vociferous retaliation. As the verbal duel continued, more Ministers got into the discussion and the Speaker had a tough time convincing both sides to focus on the power sector issue. Ruling party circles were agog over indications that the Congress high command was not too happy with the strategy of presenting white papers. (SEE PAGE 2)

## Unlimited biryani @ 99, but there's a catch!

YUVRAJ AKULA  
Hyderabad

Amidst a large number of coaching centres in the bustling streets of Ameerpet, a small roadside eatery stands out for its irresistible offer of scrumptious, unlimited biryani for just Rs 99.

As patrons enter Madhu Biryani opposite Punjab National Bank at Ameerpet, they are not just greeted by the aroma of spices and sizzles of biryani but also by the announcement of unlimited servings. As for any



If customers waste any food, they are fined Rs 200 at Madhu Biryani in Ameerpet. — Photo: Anand Dharmana

deal, there is a twist to this as well. While customers can feast on as much

chicken dum biryani as their hearts desire, they will be levied a fine that is

double the cost of biryani if even a morsel of food is wasted. "People can eat as much as they want. I will serve them continuously and they should focus on finishing the food. But if any food is wasted, you will be fined Rs 200," Madhu announces to his customers, mostly students, as they queue up to savour the biryani from 10.30 am.

While there are several eateries in the lane offering biryani for Rs 99, Madhu's biryani is known for its blend of spices and succulent meat. (SEE PAGE 2)

## Brij Bhushan aide new WFI chief, Sakshi Malik quits wrestling

NEW DELHI

With tears in her eyes, Rio Olympic bronze medallist Sakshi Malik put her wrestling shoes on the table and announced her retirement from the sport as a mark of protest against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh loyalist Sanjay Singh winning the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) election for the top job, here on Thursday.

Sanjay, a close associate of the outgoing WFI chief, became the new president

with his panel winning 13 of the 15 posts in the elections — a result that expectedly brought disappointment to the top three wrestlers — Malik, Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia — who had aggressively pushed for a change of guard at the federation.

The wrestlers had early this year launched an agitation against Bhushan, who they had accused of sexually exploiting women wrestlers. The matter is in court. "We fought from our

heart but if a man like Brij Bhushan, his business partner and a close aide is elected as the president of WFI, I give up wrestling. From today onwards you will not see me on the mat," a teary-eyed Sakshi said and kept her shoes on the table in a dramatic announcement.

"We wanted a woman president but that did not happen," the 31-year-old, who is also a Commonwealth Games gold medalist, added. PTI



10.7°C  
at BHEL  
RC Puram

HYDERABAD | PAGE 02

## Nawaz Sharif praises India

WORLD | PAGE 07



## Rana, Vastrakar wreck Australia

SPORT | PAGE 08



**ENTERTAINMENT**  
PAGE 10

## On success of films

Ayushmann says industry is thriving across genres



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