

Why pink, go saffron!

Centre allocated Rs 21,470.84 crore for the state in the Union budget



By Meenakshi Lekhi | Issue Date: December 03, 2023 | Updated: November 26, 2023 07:28 IST

Telangana was formed in 2014 after a long protest since the 1960s. K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) was the face of the protest. He sat on an indefinite fast, which culminated in the UPA government at the Centre announcing the formation of Telangana. Soon, the Lok Sabha passed the bill for bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, which led to the formation of Telangana as the 29th state in India. Rao became the first chief minister of Telangana. If you closely follow KCR's speeches, it has an emotional pitch. In his latest speech for the upcoming assembly elections, Rao said his indefinite fast was the reason that the Congress gave in to the demand of a new state, and that if anyone votes for the Congress they are betraying him and belittling his efforts. But people of Telangana are focused on real issues of ground-level welfare and development, and KCR cannot fool them with his emotional tactics.

Telangana ranks ninth in India's GDP ranking, but it is not solely because of the efforts of the KCR government. The BJP-led Central government had allocated Rs21,470.84 crore for the state in the Union budget of 2023. Also, people of Telangana are hardworking and have a growth mindset. It is a state where agriculture accounts for 21 per cent share of GDP; farmers still depend on rains for irrigation.

All said, the woes of people of Telangana just don't seem to end. Now, KCR's Dharani portal, an integrated land records management system, has created mayhem. Allegedly, Rao's family amassed land worth hundreds of crores and left many small land owners distraught, without any claim to their own land. Rao's insistence of removing corruption with Dharani proved counterproductive because the situation has not changed.

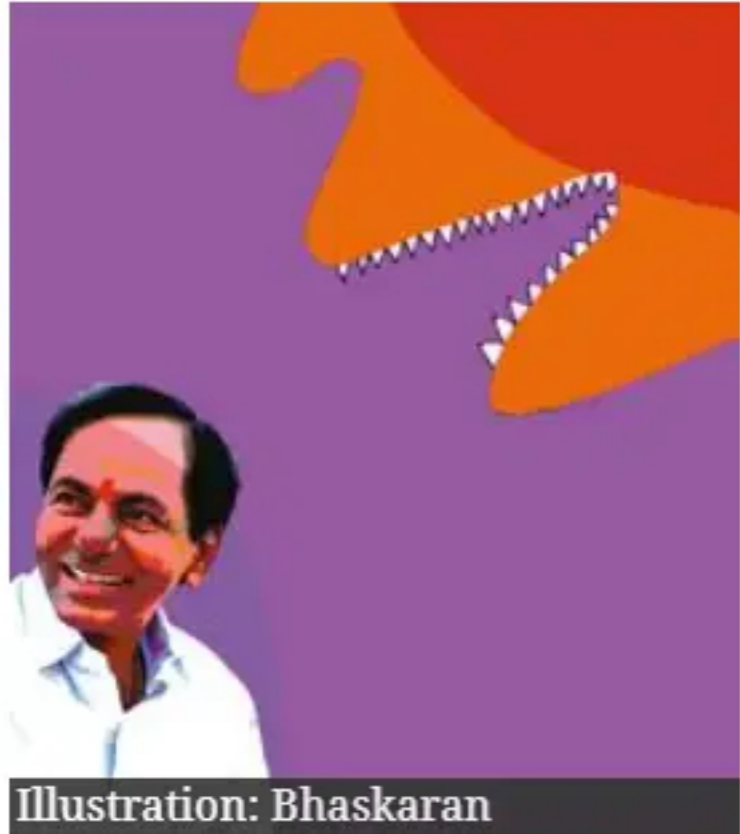


Illustration: Bhaskaran

During his 10-year rule, the only major development Rao can boast of is the multi-crore scams—be it the Miyapur land scam, the note for vote scam, or, for that matter, the EAMCET (engineering, agricultural and medical common entrance test) paper leak scam. These scams are closely linked to the nepotism that exist in KCR's party—Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS). KCR's daughter K. Kavitha, who is the member of Telangana Legislative Council, was involved in the Delhi liquor scam. The Enforcement Directorate accused her of holding a 65 per cent stake in Indospirit, a liquor company. She was questioned by the probe agency at her home in Hyderabad on December 11, 2022.

Arun Pillai, a Hyderabad-based businessman and one of the key persons in the Delhi excise scam, was arrested by the ED in March 2023 in connection with the scam. The ED claims Pillai represented Kavitha's interests, and that he conspired to channelise payoffs of Rs100 crore to the Aam Aadmi Party functionaries. The allegations are yet to be proven in the court of law, but involvement in such activities reveal the corrupt practices in the BRS.

KCR's son K.T. Rama Rao is a legislator from Sircilla constituency and is the state minister for IT, municipal administration and urban development. KCR's nephew, T. Harish Rao, is MLA for Siddipet and Telangana's cabinet minister for finance. The whole of KCR's family has been given powerful positions in the state and his attitude has been that of a dictator rather than a civil administrator. Thugocracy, after all, is a major byproduct of nepotism.

Telangana's internal system is rotten with practices of bribery, exploitation of the poor, who have been given peanuts in the form of welfare programmes. Telangana needs a saffron change, and that is bound to happen.

Lekhi is Union minister of state for external affairs and culture.