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Amid Cong ruckus over CD, House passes Finance Bill sans debate

Treasury not Akshayapatra, says BSY, defending move to borrow; Total liabilities pegged at 26.9% of GSDP, but CM says govt will try to keep it under 25%

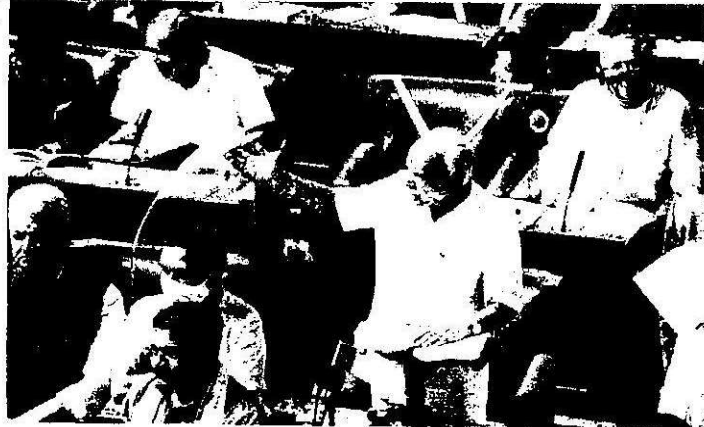
ANUSHA RAVI @ Bengaluru

AMID continuous sloganeering and protests over the CD-gate row by Congress, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Wednesday presented the government's response to the budget debate.

The Assembly even passed the Finance Bill without clarification, supplementation or critique of the government's response with Congress MLAs shouting slogans against the government in the well of the House. Vehemently defending his budget for 2021-22 -- the first revenue deficit budget since Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2002 -- Yediyurappa said the Opposition's description of it being anti-poor and ruining the state's financial prudence was "insensitive and misleading".

"Had the Leader of Opposition been sensitive to the desperate measures we had to take due to desperate times caused by Covid-19, he would have appreciated this budget," Yediyurappa said.

In his hour-long speech, Yediyurappa refused to give in to the Congress' protest and ended his speech condemning the party for disrupting the all-important budget session. "When we were ravaged by a pandemic and natural calamities like incessant floods, how do we take up developmental activities without loans? We haven't raised loans for extravagance or banquets. Loans have been raised to help the economy and



Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa speaks at the Assembly in Bengaluru on Wednesday

people. Neither is the government armed with a magic wand to provide relief during a pandemic that nobody anticipated nor is the treasury some Akshayapatra as everyone is aware," Yediyurappa thundered.

Even as Congress protest drowned his voice, Yediyurappa gave a breakup of Karnataka's finances as compared to neighbouring states and the need for additional borrowing, while maintaining that all his previous budgets have been revenue surplus. "We have re-

ceived Rs 3,905 crore less than estimated from state's own taxes and Rs 4,318 crore less from Central taxes in 2020-21. The 15th Finance Commission has cut down our share in Central funds to 3.64 per cent as against 4.71 per cent given by the previous Finance Commission and that will cause a loss of revenue," he said.

Defending his ministers who approached court to seek gag orders, Yediyurappa said that legal experts, like Justice Santosh Hegde and B V Acharya, opined that the ministers are within their right to seek legal recourse and the Opposition had unnecessarily stalled the Assembly over it.

"I end my speech condemning your protest that has wasted the House's time and snatched an opportunity from MLAs to discuss the budget," he said.



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BS Yediyurappa, Chief Minister