

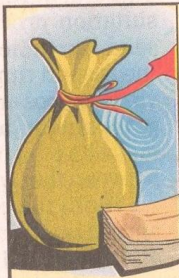
Anti-graft tools to get more bite

Plan Panel May Approve Key Measures Today

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: For all its bad blood with the Anna Hazare group over a Lokpal, the government sees strong legislation setting up an anti-corruption ombudsman and Lokayuktas as the key to accountable decision-making and transparent allocation of natural resources.

The 12th Plan document, expected to be approved by the Planning Commission on Saturday, says improved e-governance can reduce arbitrariness in allocation of resources but does not abandon the government's view that pricing of



The 12th Plan paper envisages the setting up of an anti-graft ombudsman to make decisionmaking accountable. The proposed measures indicate an awareness on the government's part that often schemes are poorly monitored or abandoned

public services must also be kept in mind.

In the chapter 'Combating Corruption', the draft admits allocations have been problematic and says "new areas of corruption" that have emerged need to be tackled. One way of dealing with the situation will be to increase providers of services, including private players, to make the field competitive.

The 12th Plan looks at an optimum 8.2% growth if all policy options are utilized and

calls for a consolidation of central schemes that will mean 12 flagship programmes.

These will include Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, National Health Mission, Rajiv Gandhi Vidyutikaran Yojana, rural employment guarantee, Indira Awas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, rural livelihood scheme and Integrated Child Development Scheme.

The thought behind "rationalizing" central schemes is grounded in new fiscal real-

ities. It is also a sign of an awareness that government often announces schemes that seem to lead nowhere and are poorly monitored and even abandoned.

The plan concentrates on impact areas where it feels government action is most needed. Health and education top the plan priorities with Rs 3 lakh crore allocated for the former and almost Rs 4.5 lakh crore for the latter.

There is a big emphasis on railways and roads as infrastructure takes centre stage. The allocation for railways goes up from Rs 1.9 lakh crore to Rs 4.04 lakh crore and spending on roadways is projected at Rs 4 lakh crore. Similarly, agriculture jumps from Rs 38,000 crore to Rs 75,000 crore. The spending on minority affairs is pegged at Rs 17,300 crore, up from Rs 7,000 crore.