

# Had a plot, lost it to scams

**FIVE YEARS OF UPA 2  
PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

So the time for the voter to do a reality check on the current Central government's five-year tenure is here. Whichever way she looks at it, she'll be confused. A quick sum-up, as The Tribune has done here, would show that barring economy, UPA 2 did reasonably all right, 'fair' you may call it, and yet the lead ruling partner, the Congress, is expected to reap one of its worst harvests. The irony stems from the overwhelming presence of the 'mega scams' that buffeted the government at regular intervals.

Specific sectors had their ironies too. The MGNREGS was attacked for leakages, yet it continued to be an effective tool of wealth distribution. Women faced some of the worst outrages, yet the tenure saw the most momentous changes in law for them. Food output increased steadily, and yet farmers are at a crossroads. This con saw the biggest scams, and also the most growth. Pressing the EVM button will require one clear head!



FILE PHOTO: MUKESH AGGARWAL

As the UPA goes to the voter, it has a long list of achievements, from poverty alleviation to the land Bill, yet the only question from the people is going to be on corruption and the economy. The Cong will struggle for an answer.

## Stains that will be hard to hide

**2-G licences**

Licences for the allocation of second generation of wireless telephony, '2-G spectrum', were made on the first-come first-served basis. The allocations were done in 2010 when mobile telephony in India did not require 'help' and there was need for open bidding. A Raja, Telecom Minister and UPA partner DMK MP avoided that and hid behind a policy formulated 10 years ago. The Telecom Regulatory Authority figures for September 2010 say India had 68 crore mobile connections — a huge market — when Raja decided to allocate additional spectrum. The CAG estimated a loss of Rs 1,76,000 crore.

**Coal blocks**

Policy was misused under the garb of doling out licences to extract coal. The CAG in March 2012 estimated that during 2004-2009, coal blocks

were allocated to companies without looking at revenue earnings. There was 'windfall gain' to the person who got these blocks, estimated at Rs 1,85,591 crore. The CBI probe is on.

**Commonwealth Games**

There were allegations of wrongdoings and corruption in the holding of the 2010 Commonwealth Games. Organisers led by Suresh Kalmadi, a Congress MP from Pune, had made purchases at outlandish prices. A sum of Rs 28,000 crore had been budgeted for various works and paid by the government. A toilet paper roll that would cost Rs 20 a piece was purchased at a cost of Rs 3,757. Air-conditioners were rented at Rs 4 lakh a piece. The organising committee tried to defend it instead of correcting the wrong. The CBI has registered 19 FIRs in the case.

**Black money**

Hasan Ali Khan, a businessman charged with money laundering, has reportedly \$ 8 billion (Rs 48,000 cr) of unaccounted money stashed in foreign bank accounts. His was just an example. A foreign bank gave out names of Indians who had been depositing huge amounts in European banks. A committee was set up to uncover black money. But there is little to show.

**Devas-Antrix deal**

The allocation of precious S-band spectrum of wireless communication without any bidding to Devas Multimedia, a private firm, in a deal between Antrix Corporation and the commercial wing of ISRO, led to a furore. The government scrapped the controversial deal to avoid a loss of Rs 2 lakh crore to the exchequer.

Ajay Banerjee

**ANTI-CORRUPTION  
Half-hearted approach**

**THE GOOD** Lokpal Bill: PM will be under its purview. Will have power over CBI prosecution wing. **Whistleblowers:** Whistleblowers Protection Bill lends a protective armour to whistleblowers. **Not white:** A high-powered committee has been set up to track black money.

**THE BAD** Bills on hold: Prevention of Bribery of Foreign Public Officials and Officials of Public International Organisations; Prevention of Corruption; Public Procurement; Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances; and the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill.

**THE BOTTOM LINE** Lokpal was brought in too late. It failed to change public perception.

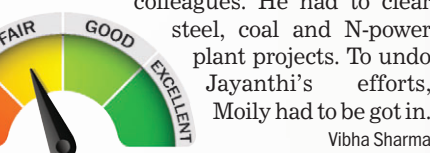
**ENVIRONMENT****Green at the cost of growth**

**THE GOOD** Centre stage: In the past five years, the ministry became 'the' ministry from being 'one of the many government departments'. Before Jairam Ramesh took over, ministers collaborated among themselves on mega projects, reducing the MoEF to a rubber stamp. **Awareness:** Greenhouse gas emissions and black carbon became the talking points. **Transparency:** Decisions put on the ministry's website, bringing in transparency.

**Talks:** Consultations on environment-related issues recognised forest dwellers' rights. Niyamgiri is a case in point. In the bauxite mining project case promoted by the Vedanta group in Odisha, the ministry recorded violations too egregious to be glossed over. **Visibility:** India's global presence has increased. **Going green:** The National Green Tribunal was set up. **Western Ghats:** The Kasturirangan committee report was accepted. The report recommended ecologically sensitive area over 37 per cent of the Ghats under the Environment Protection Act. **GM crops:** Veerappa Moily took the case to the Supreme Court. Trials for transgenic crops.

**THE BOTTOM LINE** The working of the ministry depends on extraneous factors. Along with the passion for green issues, the country's growth needs equal attention. The ministry can't take extreme positions. Jairam's 'environmental activism', demarcation of forests into 'go and no-go' zones for coal plants won him accolades from activists but invited flak from industrialists and his Cabinet colleagues. He had to clear steel, coal and N-power issues for a Green India. Moily had to go in for a Green India.

**THE BAD** Cover down: Forest cover down. The National Mission for a Green India has been launched. **Easy prey:** Tigers and elephants continue to

**SOCIAL WELFARE****Will strong, structure weak**

**THE GOOD** MGNREGA 2.0: The 'game changer' employment scheme of the UPA-1 got a facelift. Asset creation was linked to the job scheme for rural poor, bringing sanity to the programme. MGNREGA had come under criticism from many quarters, including the CAG, for building no assets, creating useless work, increasing corruption and negatively affecting agriculture. MGNREGA 2.0 included 30 new works for creation of durable assets and improvement in rural productivity. The food and rural development ministries collaborated and the scheme was linked with construction of food storage godowns in rural areas. **Land Bill:** The Land Development Bill was passed. The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2013, was passed by Parliament, replacing the archaic 119-year-old legislation. **Roam nap:** The second phase of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) catered to the states' demands for increase in entitlement.

**Naxal areas:** Focus increased on Naxal-hit areas. Roshni, a placement-linked skill development scheme targeting 50,000 rural men and women — mostly tribals — was launched in 24 worst-affected districts. The ministry supported the shift of additional Rs 1,000 crore from the second phase of the rural road project for the

constructions in these areas. **Youth initiative:** Himayat was launched in Kashmir in the face of hostile conditions created by Kashmiri separatists. Himayat initiative envisaged nearly 15,000 youth trained and placed in different jobs in the public and private sectors in a fiscal.

**THE BAD** **Suicides:** Corruption in MGNREGA could not be curbed. A recent report indicated that delay in the payment of wages led to suicides in Maharashtra. Apart from creating useless works, MGNREGA continues to be charged with creating freeloaders and encouraging rampant corruption, including creation of fake pay rolls by unscrupulous elements in all states. **Unused funds:** Utilisation of funds not completed in schemes like PMGSY. The ministry had to surrender the funds. **Non-starter:** Himayat got poor response in the Valley. Officials lament 'poor' private sector response to the programme. Only around 5,000-6,000 persons could be trained since the programme's launch in 2011.

**THE BOTTOM LINE** The ministry can be credited with good intentions. Efforts were made to plug rampant corruption in schemes like MGNREGA through computerisation, but problems remain. The ministry is also seen to have hit areas were phase of the rural road project for the

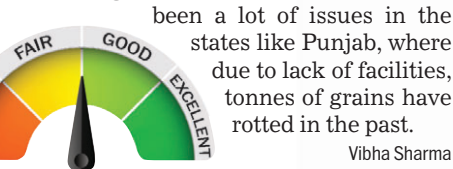
Vibha Sharma

**AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS****Grain production up, troubles remain**

**THE GOOD** Food security: Eligible households will get 5 kg food grain per person per month at subsidised prices of Rs 3, Rs 2 and Re 1 per kg, respectively, for rice, wheat and coarse grains. **Sugar decontrol:** Sugar prices remained under control. **Revolution:** Efforts are on to take Green Revolution to the North-east. **Nutri-farms:** Stress on new crop varieties rich in micro-nutrients. **MSP up:** Increase in MSP by over 100 per cent between 2004-05 and 2013-14. **More credit:** For 2013-14, the target of agriculture credit flow increased to Rs 7,00,000 crore.

**THE BOTTOM LINE** When the economy was in the doldrums, agriculture managed a decent growth rate, largely due to bettering the grain. Against a target of 4 per cent growth over the 10th Plan period, India managed around 3.64 per cent. The UPA may consider the Food Security Act an achievement but it failed to control widespread pilferage of grains in the PDS. The government admits 25-30 per cent leakage and pilferage in the PDS. Storage has increased but there have been a lot of issues in the states like Punjab, where tonnes of grains have rotted in the past.

**THE BAD** Grains rot: Storage losses are down by 99 per cent from 2.5 per cent to 'just 0.006 per cent of the total production



Vibha Sharma

**WOMEN****Amending laws to keep women safe**

**THE GOOD** Harassment: The historic Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2012 Bill passed covering even domestic workers. The Bill made it mandatory for all firms with 10 or more workers to set up complaints committees. **Getting tough:** Criminal law (IPC, CrPC and Evidence Act) amended to make punishment for sexual assault and offences stringent and enhance the definition of rape to include new crimes. **In the net:** Under the new legal framework, prominent people were held accountable for sexual assault including former Tehelka editor Tarun Tejpal, former Supreme Court Judge AK Ganguly and 'god-man' Asaram and his son.

**Protecting kids:** Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act was passed to protect children at homes, in custody and in care. **THE BOTTOM LINE** A review petition of the government was rejected. **Khops untamed:** Khap panchayats continued their diktats to regulate the behaviour of

**THE BAD** Gay rights: The Supreme Court upheld Section 377, IPC, which declares homosexuality as a criminal act. A review petition of the government was rejected. **Khops untamed:** Khap panchayats continued their diktats to regulate the behaviour of

Aditi Tandon

**DEFENCE****Slow, but on road to self-reliance**

**THE GOOD** Nuclear missile: INS Arikant is set for sea trials. **AGNIV:** Nuclear-tipped missile AGNIV has been tested. **Aircraft carriers:** One aircraft carrier from Russia and the other is under construction in India, indicating a rise of the Navy. **Indigenes:** This is ready for induction into the IAF Arjun tanks have also been inducted. **Naval satellite:** Dedicated naval satellite Rukmini has been launched. **Warships:** An increasing number of naval warships are being built. **Strike corps:** Mountain Strike Corps has been formed to ward off threat from China.

**THE BOTTOM LINE** AK Antony has been the longest serving Defence Minister but his overcautious approach is not helping. He is accused of stalling purchases on anonymous complaints. His focus on indigenous machinery will help India decrease its dependence on imports. Relations between the top brass of the forces and the MoD not congenial. While Gen VK Singh dragged the government to the Supreme Court over his age row, Navy Chief Admiral DK Joshi's resignation stunned everyone. Questions are being asked why Antony accepted the resignation immediately.

**THE BAD** Fighter jets: Over five years delay in the purchase of 126 fighter jets from France (Rafale) is a sore point. MIG-21 should have been phased out. No jets have been bought.

Ajay Banerjee

**HEALTH****Polio-free India shows the way**

**THE GOOD** Polio out: In 2009, India reported 740 polio cases, half of the global burden. By 2011, polio infections dropped to zero. In 2014, WHO gave India a polio-free certificate. **Indigenous technologies:** In 2010, the first indigenous H1N1 vaccine called Vaxifu-S launched. In 2013, indigenous technologies for detection of thalassaemia, diabetes and screening of cervix cancer launched. **New vaccines:** Hepatitis-B vaccine and second dose of measles vaccine included in universal immunisation programme in 2012. Pentavalent vaccine (combination vaccine for DPT, Hep B, Hib) introduced in

eight states as preparation for India-wide launch. **Free medicine:** The scheme to issue free medicines to patients in government hospitals failed to take off. **Neo-natal deaths:** Over three lakh babies die within 24 hours of being born annually from preventable causes. **THE BOTTOM LINE** The UPA will be best remembered for its ability to free India of polio. Several indigenous low-cost technologies were developed for detection of medical conditions, including

an H1N1 vaccine. Japanese encephalitis vaccine was launched this year but not until the infection claimed thousands of lives. New AIMS-like institutes were set up and new MBBS and PG seats created, but medical education remained mired in corruption. The MCI's elected character was restored with the Board of Governors being disbanded but transparency was lost when Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad transferred Union Health Secretary K Desraj from the ministry this February. Desraj had opposed the re-nomination of the tainted former MCI chief.

Aditi Tandon

**EDUCATION****Taking learning to different levels**

**THE GOOD** Mandatory accreditation: The UGC notified regulations making it compulsory for institutions imparting higher education to seek accreditation within six months. **RTE:** The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 implemented from 2010. As many as 2,14,561 primary and 1,76,361 upper primary schools sanctioned; 96 per cent operational. **Higher education:** 16 new central universities, IITs, IIMs, IISERs and NITs set up. **JEE:** Single entrance test for Centrally funded technical institutions called JEE Mains started by scrapping AIEEE. IITs go in for an add-on test. Only 1,50 lakh scores eligible to take it. **Evaluation:** Class X boards made optional; CBSE introduces continuous evaluation instead. **Test for teachers:** Teachers must clear test to be eligible to teach.

**THE BAD** RTE loopholes: The government drew flak for making a law that bans detention on grounds of non-performance. A government committee recommends end of the policy, saying lack of accountability

leading to poor performance. Amendment not brought in. **Aakash blues:** The low-cost access device Aakash failed to take off. **Grounded:** No ticket legislation proposed by former HRD Minister Kapil Sibal took off. **Confusion:** The tenure of HRD Minister MM Pallam Raju was eclipsed by anti-Telangana protests. He resigned from Cabinet, bunked office for months and returned, keeping policy matters pending. **Diedly meals:** Midday meal programme took a hit as 11 children died after consuming food at a school in Bihar. **THE BOTTOM LINE** The focus of higher education was to expand institutions to improve access. The RTE Act enabled entry of students to schools though targets have not been achieved. Access has improved, but quality issues remain. The Planning Commission stressed learning outcomes and quality and urged the government to create assessment systems. A single test for entry to all central technical institutions brought relief to students but IITs got away with an add-on test. JEE Advanced, a major reform Bill could not be passed.

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**HOME****Some efforts lost to disorder**

**THE GOOD** Input agencies: The Multi-Agency Centre has been set up to collate inputs of all agencies. **Database:** A NATGRID has been formed to assemble information from 21 databases and keep an eye on black money. **Naxals:** A series of steps have been taken to tackle Naxals. In the war against Naxals, the Home Ministry has an upper hand right now. **Terror:** The National Investigation Agency and Intelligence Bureau have prevented terror attacks. They will face a challenge in the forthcoming elections especially in view of the threat by Pakistan-based Maullana Masood Azhar's outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed to disrupt the polls. **Probe:** Could not extradite nabbed in Nepal. Saudi Arabia was convinced to hand over Abu Jundul, one of the masterminds of 26/11. **Blasts:** Samjhauta train blasts accused were nabbed. **Crime:** The Crime and Criminal Tracking Networked System has been put in place. The move has been welcomed by state police forces. **Border trade:** More border trade facilities have been introduced with Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

**THE BAD** Counterterrorism: A pan-India National Counterterrorism Centre could not be set up. **Probe:** Could not extradite nabbed in Nepal. Saudi Arabia was convinced to hand over Abu Jundul, one of the masterminds of 26/11. **Blasts:** Samjhauta train blasts accused were nabbed. **Crime:** The Crime and Criminal Tracking Networked System has been put in place. The move has been welcomed by state police forces. **Border trade:** More border trade facilities have been introduced with Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

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address the demands for the creation of more states.

**THE BOTTOM LINE** Anti-communal incidents have been reported from UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The Communal Violence Bill, which would have empowered the Centre to send in forces in case of communal riots, was not tabled. The CBI-IB tussle could have avoided with deft handling. Former Home Secretary RK Singh accused Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde of interfering in the working of the Delhi Police. Shinde denied the charge and a spat ensued.

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