

Jairam writes to Mamata on state's poor job scheme record

By Ashish Sinha in New Delhi

RURAL development minister Jairam Ramesh has told West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee that participation of woman workforce in MGNREGA in her state is a poor 34 per cent, well below the national average of 48 per cent.

In a recent letter to her, Jairam has also written that despite availability of sufficient funds, the eastern state has been unable to generate employment, as projected in the approved labour budget up to September-October this year.

"As on date, around ₹900 crore continues to lie unutilised with various project implementation authorities in the state," the minister wrote, adding that the state government needed to make efforts for the optimum utilisation of the unspent funds.

The communication is part of a series of letters that the minister has been writing to various chief ministers, identifying weak areas in the implementation of the statutory flagship scheme.

Jairam's letter to Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati — in which he had pushed for a CBI probe into the alleged misuse of MGNREGA funds in the state — had turned highly controversial. Mayawati had, in fact, taken up the matter with Prime Minister, accusing Jairam of politicising the issue.

In his letter to Mamata, dated November 30, the Union minister has said the key post of West Bengal MGNREGA com-

missioner has been lying vacant and it needs to be filled-in to ensure coordination with the state/central government and the programme implementing authorities.

Jairam has also said that the state must earmark adequate funds for important line departments such as agriculture, horticulture and fisheries for effective coverage of beneficiaries.

The minister has, moreover, advised that steps need to be taken to ensure that panchayats effectively perform the role

envisaged in the implementation of MGNREGA.

"I leave these thoughts with you and seek your personal intervention to monitor and

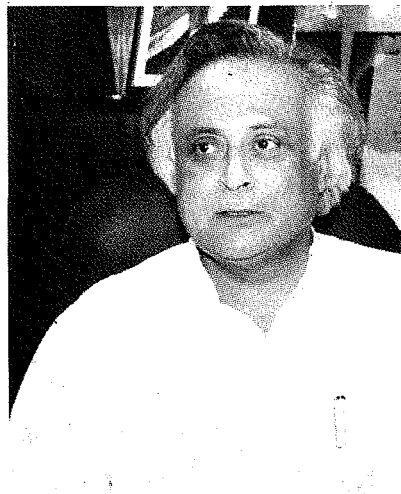
'About ₹900 crore lying unutilised'

resolve these expeditiously. I assure you of fullest support of my ministry in your endeavour to making West Bengal a model

state for MGNREGA implementation," Ramesh wrote.

The minister has reminded Mamata that the state government had assured the ministry that it would forward a fund release proposal by November 30 and comply with all conditions for the release of the second installment by November 25.

"I hope that the state government would adhere to the agreed timelines for smooth and timely release of second tranche during the financial year 2011-12 to West Bengal," he wrote.



Ramesh's letter to Mamata says the participation of woman workforce in MGNREGA in West Bengal is 34 per cent compared to the national average of 48 per cent.

