

Bengal may get another ₹2,000 cr

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West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's flexing of muscle appears to be yielding dividends, as the state after securing an economic package of ₹8,750 crores from the Centre is soon likely to get another ₹2,000 crores from the Union ministry of rural development for implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MG-NREGA).

Ms Banerjee had taken credit for stonewalling the Cabinet decision on 51 per cent FDI in retail and later on she shot off a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh just on the eve of the Cabinet meeting to stall a decision on the National Food Security Bill last Tuesday. "The ministry of rural development will release very soon an amount of ₹2,000 crores for West Bengal under MG-

The Centre had given state an economic package of ₹8,750 crores and the state is likely to get another ₹2,000-crore for MG-NREGA

NREGA," sources said.

The West Bengal appears to be gearing up to utilise the MG-NREGA funds in a big way and is learnt to have set a target of spending over ₹5,000 crores by the end of this financial year, while target for next year (2012-13) is of an expenditure of ₹7,000 crores. The state government has sounded the ministry of rural development of its plan to create 20,000 crore mandays of jobs under MG-NREGA for a minor irrigation alone in

an indication that the Trinamul Congress-led state government would be putting more pressure on the Centre for funds under flagship schemes to further employment generation.

The windfall appears to be taking place even after Union minister of rural development Jairam Ramesh's recent letter to Ms Banerjee in which he had raised the issue of over ₹900 crores under MG-NREGA lying unspent in West Bengal. However, the state government is of the view that over ₹487 crores under MG-NREGA is lying unspent with Gram Panchayats controlled by the Left and the Congress. "Ms Banerjee has so far toured 11 districts in the state and has also requested Gram Panchayats controlled by Left and the Congress to execute works under MG-NREGA. A team of officials from the Centre too had accompanied her," sources added.