

# NREGA: Jairam cries foul, dares Maya

statesman news service

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT: The Union rural development minister, Mr Jairam Ramesh (*in photo*), has shot off a letter to the UP chief minister, Miss Mayawati, asking why a CBI probe should not be ordered into the alleged misuse of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA scheme in the state.

"... if the state government has nothing to hide and has a clear conscience, it should have no objection to our request to have a thorough CBI inquiry conducted into MG-NREGA implementation in some districts," Mr Ramesh said in his letter

He cited seven districts in the state where Central funds have been allegedly misused. They are Balrampur, Gonda,

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Mahoba, Sonbhadra, Sant Kabir Nagar and Mirzapur.

"Madam Chief Minister, the Union Ministry of Rural Development always has the option of stopping funds to Uttar Pradesh, either wholly or partially, for



MG-NREGA till credible action has been taken by the state government," Mr Ramesh's letter said.

The minister said the need for such a CBI probe is "urgent" since the labour budget under MG-NREGA has exceeded Rs 5000 crore in 2011/12 in UP. "The

criminal conspiracies in these districts to defraud the Central and state government appear to be as scandalous as what has been the case with the National Rural Health Mission in the state which is the subject of an ongoing CBI investigation," he wrote. Mr Ramesh said many "serious and brazen violations and cases of deliberate embezzlement of funds" have come to the notice of his ministry and added that the UP government has not been taking any worthwhile action on the findings and recommendations of National Level Monitors.

According to analysts, Mr Ramesh's move is with an eye on next year's UP elections. A CBI probe into a new case on the eve of polls is likely to embarrass the BSP immensely.