

# NREGP invite fails to enthuse

SREELATHA MENON

New Delhi, 18 November

The appointment of ombudsmen in each state for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP), which had already faced criticism for the weak profile of the post, is set to get more controversial.

Noted activists and social workers nominated by the Centre recently to select ombudsmen for NREGP in all states are saying it is a waste of time. And a prominent name, Jean Dreze, has declined the nomination. He was nominated

to the panel to select ombudsmen in Uttar Pradesh.

Lack of time was a problem

for him, Dreze told *Business Standard*, but apart from that, the potential of the ombudsman had been "severely diminished in several ways".

It has to keep its proceedings secret, can be removed by state governments and has no power to impose penalties, he noted.

The post of ombudsman is mentioned in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

but its powers have been defined in the later-drafted rules. An ombudsman does have powers to take complaints and issue directions for conducting spot investigation, lodge police cases

against erring parties and to initiate proceedings on his own accord. He can also give orders but cannot ensure these

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