

Bengal accuses ICMR of sending defective Covid-19 test kits

Mumbai | Updated on April 20, 2020 Published on April 20, 2020

Prashasti Awasthi

Mamata Banerjee led-Bengal government, which has drawn criticism for the low rate of coronavirus tests, has blamed ICMR-NICED [Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases] for providing substandard and defective test kits, as per the Hindustan Times report.

The state health department took to microblogging site Twitter and tweeted: “The apparently defective test kits supplied by ICMR-NICED, Kolkata, are resulting in a high number of repeat / confirmatory tests and causing delays and other attendant problems at a time when we are battling a pandemic.”

“Earlier when kits were required in smaller quantities they were imported, standardized and then distributed by NIV, Pune. But when the demand started rising ICMR imported the kits and sent them directly to the 16 regional hubs, including NICED, in Kolkata. The kits were then distributed to state-run medical colleges where they were required to be standardized. This standardization is not being done because of lack of time and technical knowledge,” said Shanta Dutta, NICED director to Hindustan Times.

Kolkata’s ICMR-NICED is a research institute under the Union health ministry and the regional Virus Research Diagnostic Lab (VRDL) for eastern India.

The state had reported its first Covid-19 positive case on March 17. However, the state authorities sealed some areas declaring them as hotspots as recent as last week.

Experts alleged that Bengal had procrastinated their plan of action to combat Covid-19. According to senior cardiologist Kunal Sarkar cited in the HT report, identification of such ‘micro-spots’ would be of no use, if the frequency of testing does not increase.

“Sample testing in India is quite low. And in West Bengal, it is exceptionally low. We need to understand that it is not a competition of low numbers. If we suppress numbers in a state, then our hot spots would amount to nothing but fallacies,” said Sarkar.

Since last week, the eastern state has been testing 200 samples every day on an average. Shanta Dutta, director of the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED)– ICMR, said that the state government was not sending enough samples for testing. NICED – ICMR, Kolkata, is a laboratory under the Virus Research Diagnostic Laboratory network of the Union health ministry, HT report added.

Published on April 20, 2020

Source: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/bengal-accuses-icmr-of-sending-defective-covid-19-test-kits/article31386362.ece#>