

AYUSHMAN BHARAT

NHA accuses Bengal of misleading people

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NEW DELHI: Two days after West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee announced to withdraw from Centre's flagship Ayushman Bharat-SwasthyaSaathi scheme, the National Health Authority (NHA) accused the state government of "misleading" the people on its official website by claiming that it solely funded the scheme.

The letter, issued by NHA CEO Indu Bhushan to the state additional health secretary, comes two days after Banerjee announced that her government would stop paying the state's share for the national health scheme. She had alleged that the Centre was taking unilateral credit for a jointly-funded project by using the pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in all the official communications.

"The state, during several instances, has provided incorrect facts concerning the Ayushman Bharat-SwasthyaSaathi scheme on their official website. The official website claims that the entire premium for the scheme is borne

by the state government, making no mention of Ayushman Bharat or PM-JAY even though the centre is contributing 60% of the funds," stated the letter, a copy of which is with Hindustan Times.

Bhushan's letter further stated that the Centre paid ₹175 crore as its share in the first phase of the Ayushman Bharat scheme. Without the central scheme, the number of beneficiaries would halve under the state's scheme—1.11 crore or 55% of West Bengal's families to 50 lakh or around 25% of the families, it added.

States are supposed to bear 40% of the project cost, while the Centre will foot 60% of the bill.

The official website of the scheme makes no mention of Ayushman Bharat and states, "The entire premium is borne by the state government and no contribution from the beneficiary."

Trinamool secretary general and education minister Partha Chatterjee did not respond to calls and a text message from HT till 9.40 pm. Other ministers, who did not want to be named, said only the CM could comment on this since she is in charge of the health department.