

Russia supplies ex-USSR, Iran, North Korea with virus test kits

March 12 2020

Russia said Thursday it has sent test kits for the novel coronavirus to countries including Iran, North Korea and ex-Soviet states.

The state health watchdog said in a statement that Moscow had sent 800 test kits to ex-Soviet states including Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, as well as to Iran, North Korea and Mongolia.

Russia ally Iran received 500 kits which can be used to carry out 50,000 tests, the watchdog said, adding that these were supplied free of charge.

Iran is one of the countries most affected by the outbreak with 9,000 [cases](#) and 354 deaths.

The closed state of North Korea, another ally of Moscow, has not confirmed a single case of COVID-19, although there is a major outbreak in neighbouring South Korea.

Russia has already supplied 10 countries with test kits which have been used to identify cases in Belarus and Armenia, the watchdog said.

The tests are made at "Vector", a state-run virus and biotechnology research centre in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk.

Russia earlier this month banned the export of surgical masks, ventilators and hazmat suits to ensure supplies for its own citizens.

So far, Russia has confirmed 28 cases of coronavirus, most of them people who had recently visited Italy.

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