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PCB gears up to install air quality stations every 10 km

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HYDERABAD: In a far-reaching move to keep citizens informed about air pollution, the Telangana State Pollution Control Board (TSPCB) is gearing up to issue regular health advisories based on ambient air quality across the city.

Senior officials at TSPCB said health advisories would be issued once ambient air quality index (AQI) monitoring stations are in place for every 10 km stretch. “The AQI stations will supplement the existing six real-time and 20 manual AQI monitoring stations which monitor air quality round-the-clock,” an official said.

“At present, the PCB maintains six real-time and 20 manual AQI monitoring stations, which is by far the highest in the country,” said N Raveendhar, former environmental scientist, TSPCB. The PCB provides real-time data through its website from University of Hyderabad in Gachibowli, Icrisat in Patancheru, IDA Pashamylaram, Bollaram industrial area, Sanathnagar and zoo park.

Officials said the PCB will also be able to prepare action plans to improve air quality and meet prescribed standards once the new stations are set up. “If AQI levels increase, a large percentage of the population is likely to experience adverse health problems,” an expert said.

AQI is a number used by government departments or agencies to communicate to the public how polluted the air is. AQI stations are meant to monitor the level of pollutants such as carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, suspended particulate matter (SPM) and ozone, among others, in the atmosphere.