

DELHI

City better equipped to curb pollution this winter

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20 new ambient air quality monitoring stations likely to start functioning by October-end

Delhi will be heading into winter 2017 better equipped than ever before when it comes to air pollution data, with 20 new ambient air quality monitoring stations likely to start functioning by the end of October. After that, experts say, the challenge will be to make effective use of that data to tailor pollution-control measures.

With the 20 new stations of the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), which has six stations currently, likely to be set up in October, the total monitoring stations in the Capital, including the ones operated by the Central Pollution Control Board and the Ministry of Earth Sciences, will reach 40 – the highest number for any Indian city.

On Tuesday, Delhi Environment Minister Imran Hussain visited the site of one of the under-construction stations to review the progress. The 26 DPCC stations would help taking Delhi's air quality data from macro to micro, making localised solutions possible, a senior DPCC official said.

Real-time data

The official added that analysers for the stations would start being installed by the end of this week, and the stations would start producing real-time data within 48 hours of that. By October 15, most of the stations are likely to start producing data, which would include particulate matter and toxic gases.

Apart from just increasing the number of stations, the new stations are spread across a variety of land-use, from industrial to

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Anumita Roychowdhury, an executive director and the head of the air pollution and clean transportation programmes of the Centre for Science and Environment, said the new stations would enable “micro-mapping of pollution”.

“There will be a better understanding of Delhi’s pollution. The next question will be how is the data from all the stations is integrated,” she said.

The Supreme Court-monitored Graded Response Action Plan, which was notified by the Union Environment Ministry in January, will be implemented in the winter for the first time.

Measures to roll out

Starting October 15, strict pollution control measures, including the shutting down of the Badarpur power plant, under the plan will be rolled out. Ms. Roychowdhury said the new monitoring stations would enable better implementation of the plan.

However, experts said there were still some questions remaining. “We can set up any number of monitoring stations, but what we do with them is important. We should have a system where the stations are used proactively to issue health advisories. Air quality and meteorological data should be integrated so we can predict high pollution episodes to an extent,” said Sunil Dahiya, a campaigner with Greenpeace India.

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