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No more traffic blues! Cycle home

M.P. PRAVEEN

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Bicycle club's rack under north over bridge in Kochi. Photo : Thulasi Kakkat

Good news for city dwellers who bemoan getting stuck in the notorious Kochi traffic every day: an SMS-driven bicycle club is expanding its coverage right into the city, after mostly serving IT professionals at the Infopark in Kakkanad.

To facilitate this, the city Corporation has given its nod to set up modern cycle racks at nine major points in the city.

Four racks have already come up at Marine Drive, under the North Overbridge, South railway station and near the Kaloor bus stand. Racks will soon come up near KSRTC bus stand, Manorama Junction, boat jetty, and Kacherippady.

“More racks centered on tourist spots in the suburbs may come up shortly since the tourism department has evinced interest in expanding their similar partnership with us in Thiruvananthapuram,” said M.S. Athirup, who runs the Athi’s Bicycle Club.

Initially, a nominal fee was charged for the service but now it’s absolutely free for 50 hours in a month thanks to the wide range of sponsorships. Those interested in availing of the service of the club may register for free by sending their name, address, email and profession to the number 96455-11155. They can immediately use the cycles from the nearest rack by sending the unique ID of both the rack and the cycle by SMS, for which they will get a reply with the combination to unlock the cycle. Cycles can be kept for a maximum of two days after which it should be returned to the nearest rack and the operators should be informed through SMS. “We have a dedicated team, which follows-up a cycle already lent,” said Athirup, a B.Tech graduate, who is now full time into the business. The club, which was first launched at Technopark in Thiruvananthapuram in 2011, started operating at Kochi’s Infopark two years later. It received the permission from the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation to operate within the city limits in January last year. The club now boasts of over 5,000 members and 200 cycles across two cities.