

Athi's bicycle club, which has five hubs in Kochi, provides bicycles free of cost to roam around. All you have to do is just send an SMS

Enjoy traffic-free experience in Kochi



Members of Athi's bicycle club

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DECCAN CHRONICLE

For Athirup, cycling is not merely a hobby. That is why he started Athi's bicycle club, an eco-friendly urban bicycling initiative, providing bicycles free of cost in an effort to make people aware of the health aspects of cycling and to reduce traffic congestion. Those who want to roam around the city in a bicycle just have to send an SMS to the customer care to use the bicycles kept at five bicycle hubs in Kochi city.

"It was in 2011 that we started this initiative in Thiruvananthapuram, which is still successful. Later, in 2013, we expanded our services to Kochi with a station in Infopark," says Athirup, claiming that they have nearly 5,000 members as of now.

Recently, the Kochi Corporation has offered its support to the venture and allowed four new centres within the city. "The new hubs are located near Kaloor bus terminal, North railway station, south railway station and in Menaka," he adds.

It started by taking a fee, but as the attempt earned recognition, they made the service free. "Earlier, we used to take ₹10 from each rider per use. But now, we have made it totally free-of-cost. We have a customer care team in Kakkanad



and our staff will take care of needs of the riders. They will brief the first-time users about the whole process involved. As of now, only those who are passionate about cycling use this service. A major chunk of our customers include youngsters, government employees and college-going students. As a next step, we are planning to popularise it among tourists," says

Athirup, explaining the benefits of cycling.

According to him, this can reduce traffic block, pollution, and accident rate. "Studies have shown that bicycle riders are less prone to accidents than others. It is a safe way of commuting. Also, one need not be worried about parking lot. You can park your bicycle as close to the destination," he sums up.