

Bicycle club on expansion mode, offers 50-hr free ride

Jisha Surya | TNN

Thiruvananthapuram: City's SMS-driven bicycle club, Athi's Bicycle Club (ABC), is in a revamp mode. Fitness freaks and bicycle enthusiasts have a reason to cheer as the bicycles will be available for pedalling free of cost for the first 50 hours. A nominal fee of Rs 2 per hour will be charged afterwards. New bicycle racks, each having five bicycles, will also come up at 15 locations in the city soon.

M S Athirup, a city-based engineer, conceived the innovative concept of a bicycle club, which enables users to take cycles from any rack and lock at any other rack near their destination. The club was launched in March 2011.

Athirup's dream of providing cycles free of cost was realized when a number of organizations expressed interest in sponsoring and



The new cycle rack of Athi's bicycle club at Kowadiar

maintaining cycles. "The LIC has offered support to set up racks in 15 locations in the city. In order to get the support of the city corporation, I have set up a model rack near Tennis Club at Kowdiar. Once we get permission, cycle racks will come up at 15 locations in the city," Athirup said.

He launched a similar initiative in Technopark, with the support of Allianz, and

in Kochi. "Now we have got sponsors such as LIC and HDFC, who not only agreed to provide bicycles, but also offered support to maintain cycles. Finding that the bicycle club at Technopark was a success, Allianz has offered 20 new cycles there. Twenty cycles, which are currently used in Technopark, will be brought to the racks in the city," he said.

ABC had more than 4,200 registered users in 2013. Athirup said they receive an average of 11 SMSs per day. Already, cycles are available free of cost between 9pm and 6am everyday.

Athirup admitted that some cycles get destroyed by miscreants occasionally. He, however, sees it as an occupational hazard.

"Compared to the huge benefit society gets from it, I prefer to ignore it as a minor issue," he said.

To know more about the club, SMS abc to 9645511155.

