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Plea to reinstall punching machine at corporation office

Special Correspondent

Human Rights Defence Forum petitions Ombudsman

KOCHI: The Ombudsman for Local Self-Government Institutions has been petitioned to order the secretary of the Kochi Corporation to get the punching machine at the corporation office reinstalled to ensure that employees reported for work on time and did not leave before the closing hour.

The Human Rights Defence Forum, in a public interest petition, also urged Ombudsman M.R. Hariharan Nair to get the restrictions on the entry of members of the public into the Corporation office lifted.

The Corporation council had late last year restricted the entry between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. which has been widely criticised.

Human Rights Defence Forum general secretary D.B. Binu pointed out in the petition that the restriction caused enormous inconvenience to the public, corruption and late arrival of Corporation employees for work.

‘Machine missing’

He pointed out that a punching machine, meant to record the arrival for work and departure of Corporation, was installed at the office way back in 2001 when work shirking and late arrival for work was rampant.

The machine for some time ensured the arrival in time and checked leaving early of the office staff.

But the machine had disappeared mysteriously and the bunking by the staff became a routine affair.

When Mr. Binu sought the whereabouts of the punching machine through a Right-to-Information query, the corporation public information officer had casually replied that the machine was missing.

Because of the unbridled absenteeism of the staff, the corporation secretary had issued an order that a movement register should be kept in all sections of the office. But in response to an RTI query, office said that the programme implementation unit kept no such register, thus pointing to the level of indiscipline in the Corporation office.

Though the corporation office said that action was taken against 39 officials, including three superintendents, for absenteeism, they had only been warned, Mr. Binu pointed out in the petition.