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## Bogus employees, duplicate attendance galore in SDMC's biometric system

### Software lacks support mechanism to check duplication

Sanitation workers in the South Delhi Municipal Corporation have managed to share fingerprints with colleagues, while others have got brand new sets of biometric data with each posting.

The records of the SDMC have a range of anomalies, including ghost employees, no check on hiring substitute *safai karamcharis* and incomplete documents at the time of hiring.

These irregularities were highlighted by the Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing in January this year. EOW's Deputy Commissioner of Police S.D. Mishra wrote a letter to SDMC Commissioner Manish Gupta raising the issue of "lacunae in system of record maintenance".

The Crime Branch had been asked by the High Court to investigate a case of ghost employees in the erstwhile Municipal Corporation of Delhi. In his January 29 letter, Mr. Mishra said the “investigating agency faced many hurdles” while enquiring into the Jagrook Welfare Society case due to a lack of “correct information and documents”.

He added that the software provided by Transline India Business Solution did not have any support mechanism to check duplication in the database. Moreover, he said, the software did not store the employees’ fingerprints when they were being fed into the system.

The biometric id changed with transfers to different Zones or departments, there was no control over the hiring of substitutes when *safai karamcharis* went on leave and there was no police verification of new employees.

“The addresses of substitute *safai karamcharis* could not be traced despite best efforts as many jhuggies were demolished/relocated and their subsequent addresses were not collected by MCD,” stated Mr. Mishra’s letter.

The DCP went on to suggest a “review of the entire system of recruitment and deployment of *safai karamcharis* ” in the SDMC. This letter was highlighted by SDMC Leader of Opposition Farhad Suri at a recent meeting. Mr. Suri alleged corruption in the manipulation of the biometric attendance system.

In fact, the unified MCD's own Enforcement Cell had found loopholes in the system in 2011. “The biometric attendance reports are not giving authentic data,” the director of the cell had written on February 1, 2011.

The Enforcement Cell found that employees in its own office were shown to be present in the biometric rolls when they were absent. Some names were not present on the list despite being punched into the system in a valid manner. One biometric id was being shared by two employees, and entry, exit and total working hours of many employees of the same department were identical on a particular date.

When asked about the irregularities highlighted in Mr. Mishra's letter, Mr. Gupta said: “I don't remember the letter as it was eight months ago. But, we have been working towards making our system better.”

In 13 wards, on a pilot basis, the civic body has done away with manual registers, so employees have to use the biometric system as it is linked to their salaries. Mr. Gupta said since the beginning of this year the usage of the system has gone up from 20-30 per cent to 80 per cent. Even Mr. Gupta and other senior officials mark their attendance through the biometric system, but there is a problem in its operations at the zonal level.

“We have around 40,000 employees, so it is not an easy task to switch to the biometric system in one go,” said Mr. Gupta.