



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Performance of the Cochin SEZ: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

For analysing the performance of the Cochin SEZ primary data was collected by way of conducting interview with managers and workers of Cochin SEZ. Managers in Cochin SEZ units were satisfied with the quality of infrastructure facilities and quality of governance prevailed in Cochin SEZ. Exemption from the payment of Sales Tax, Contract Tax, VAT, State Entry Tax, Stamp Duty and registration charges on land transfer are the various State level tax exemption availed to the Cochin SEZ unit. Similarly Cochin SEZ units can avail subsidies on land rent, factory rent and on purchase of capital goods. As per managers the present Labour Laws applied in Cochin SEZ were functioning effectively. Cochin SEZ unit workers agreed that they are enjoying various basic facilities which include medical reimbursement, bonus, commission, insurance for industrial accidents, leaves, sanitary and training facilities within SEZ. The training facilities are mainly undertaken within Cochin SEZ and workers in Cochin SEZ were satisfied with minimum wages, additional remunerations, leaves available, total working hours, training, safety measures and equal treatment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The history of SEZ in India dates back to the setting up of EPZ (IshitaDey 2009). The first Zone was set up at Kandla in Gujarat in the year 1965 with the objective of generating employment opportunities and promoting exports (AggarwalAradhna 2004). A decade later, second Zone namely Santa Cruz Electronics EPZ was set up in the year 1974. On the basis of the recommendations of the Tandon Committee on "Free Trade Zones and 100% Export Oriented Units" the Government of India decided to establish four more Zones (AggarwalAradhna 2012). These were at Noida, Falta, Cochin and Chennai. Visakhapatnam EPZ was established in the year 1989. In the year 1998, the first private sponsored EPZ started its operations in Surat.

In the absence of conducive macroeconomic policy frame work, inadequate infrastructure, lack of promotional strategy, the performance of EPZs in India were not significant in terms of exports contribution, creation of employment opportunities and generation of foreign investments. So the Government of India formed three committees, for reviewing the performance of EPZs in India. They were Kaul Committee in 1978, Review Committee on Electronics in 1979 and Tandon Committee in 1981. These Committees pointed out that the growth of EPZs was hampered by several handicaps like, non-stability in the policy, no Single Window Scheme for clearance within the Zone, procedural complexity, infrastructural deficiencies, rigid FDI policy, limited concessions, limited powers of the Zone authorities to take decisions, cumbersome custom procedures, bank guarantees and rigid movement of goods

Converting EPZs into Special Economic Zone (SEZ)

For correcting the above mentioned shortcomings in the EPZs model, a new Special Economic Zone Policy was announced by the Government of India in April 2000 under the EXIM Policy of 1997-2002. A policy of setting up of SEZ was introduced in India on April 1, 2000 with a view of providing a more competitive free trade environment for exports. From 1st November 2000 the EPZs at Kandla, Santa Cruz, Cochin and Surat have been converted into SEZs and in the year 2003, the other EPZs were also converted into SEZs. During the period from November 1, 2000 to February 9, 2006, the SEZs in India were operating under the provisions of the Foreign Trade Policy (Deepak Shah 2009). In May 2005, the SEZ Act was passed by the Parliament and SEZ Rules came into force from February 10, 2006.

SEZs in India are rendering various services like, quality infrastructure, an attractive fiscal package, the minimum possible regulations, single window scheme for clearance within the zone, promotion of exports of goods as well as services, promotion of investment from domestic and foreign sources, creating new employment

opportunities, encouraging public- private partnership to develop world- class infrastructure, providing an internationally competitive and hassle -free environment and attracting private investment (domestic and foreign), to boost economic growth, exports and employment.

Methodology of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to understand the effectiveness of various facilities provided by the authorities to the Cochin SEZ during the period under study. The data was collected from primary sources and the data were collected from the management and workers through the structured interview scheduled prepared by the researcher.

For determining the Sample Size the researcher used the Sample Size Table of the Research Advisors (www.ResearchAdvisors.com/tools/samplesize.htm). The following formula had been used to find out for determining required sample size for conducting the study.

$$n = \frac{X^2 * N * P * (1 - P)}{(ME^2 * (N - 1)) + (X^2 * P * (1 - P))}$$

Where

n= Sample size

X^2 = Chi Square for the specified Confidence Level at 1 degree of freedom

N = Population Size

P= Population proportion (.50 in this table)

ME= Desired Margin of Error

During the end of the study period employment opportunities created by the Cochin SEZ was 12142 and the researcher needed a sample of sufficient number to generate a 95% confidence level with margin of 5% error. As per the table the researcher would needed responses from a sample of 372 employees working in Cochin SEZ. So the researcher interviewed with 372 workers employed in Cochin SEZ. Similarly there were 122 units functioning in Cochin SEZ and the researcher needed a sample of sufficient number to generate a 95% confidence level with margin of 5% error. As per the table the researcher needed responses from a sample of 93 representative firms in Cochin SEZ. So the researcher interviewed with 93 Managers in units of Cochin SEZ.

Performance of the Cochin SEZ

Incentive packages, quality of governance and infrastructure facilities offered to the units in the Export Processing Zones are the important factors which influence the performance of the Zones (Aggarwal Aradhna 2004). For exploring various factors responsible for the performance of the Cochin SEZ in Kerala State, the researcher attempt to evaluate effectiveness of various incentive schemes and facilities offered to the Cochin SEZ. Here researcher considered

quality of infrastructure facilities, quality of governance, labour laws applicable, incentives and subsidies availing to the Units located in Cochin SEZ and various facilities provided to the workers in Cochin SEZ for measuring the performance of Cochin SEZ.

Basic infrastructural facilities in Cochin SEZ

Lack of infrastructure facilities is one of the main constraints which will affect the economic development in developing countries. There are practical difficulties in the development of infrastructure facilities in all the places in a country. So the Government of India introduced a concept called SEZ with the intention to promote the infrastructure facilities in the country. In India the infrastructure facilities provided to the SEZs are varying from one SEZ to another. Hence attempt is made to evaluate the performance of the Cochin SEZ vis a vis the infrastructure facilities made available to Cochin Special Economic Zone

Table 1 shows the various basic infrastructure facilities provided by the Cochin SEZ to the industrial units for carrying out their business in successful manner.

	YES	NO
Water exclusive arrangement	✓	
Water purifier	✓	
Effluent treatment	✓	
Electricity exclusive arrangement	✓	
Tele communication	✓	
Power Plant Scheme	✓	
Storage	✓	
Hotel facilities	✓	
Dispensary	✓	
Banking service with ATM facilities	✓	
Post Office	✓	
Road Networks	✓	
Spaces for conducting business	✓	
Educational Facilities		✓
Recreational Facilities		✓
Residential facilities		✓
Shopping Complex		✓

Table 1: Provision of basic infrastructural facilities in Cochin SEZ (Firm perspective)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
As already stated the responses for the questions were collected through interviews with executives and workers. The responses shows that the important infrastructure facilities like water, power, effluent treatment plants, communication facilities, road network, spaces for conducting business, hotel, dispensary and banking services were made available to the units in the Cochin SEZ.

However some of the other facilities like residential, educational facilities for the children of the employees and the shopping facilities are not made available and hence need attention.

Quality of infrastructure facilities in Cochin SEZ

It is understood that the Cochin SEZ offering various infrastructure facilities to the promotion and development of economic activities. The quality of infrastructure facilities provided to Zone is one of the important factors which determined the process of industrial development in Zone area.

So the researcher had interview with the managers to understand the satisfaction about the quality of infrastructures offered in Cochin SEZ and the responses are presented in the table 2.

	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Highly Satisfactory
Adequacy of Water Supply	9%	42%	49%
Water Charges	17%	66%	17%
Continuity of Power Supply	0%	44%	56%
Power Charges	18%	65%	17%
Warehouse Facilities	23%	64%	13%
Container Handling Facilities	15%	83%	2%
Efficiency of Banking Facilities	26%	63%	11%
Quality of Agency Services	3%	46%	51%
Transport Facilities	16%	67%	17%
Logistics	28%	62%	10%
Port Facilities	14%	66%	20%
Tele Phone Facilities	18%	62%	20%

Table 2: The levels of satisfaction about the quality of infrastructure facilities available in Cochin SEZ

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
The observation of the table shows that highest level of dissatisfaction on the quality of infrastructural facilities noticed were 28%, 26% and 23% towards the logistics, efficiency of banking services and ware house facilities respectively. The levels of satisfaction on the quality of infrastructural facilities are either satisfactory or highly satisfactory. The highly satisfied infrastructure facilities are quality of agency services, adequacy of water supply and continuity of power supply. The satisfactory level of infrastructural include water charges, power charges, warehouse facilities, container handling facilities, efficiency of banking facilities, transport facilities, logistic facilities, telephone and port and facilities. This shows that the Cochin SEZ is well equipped for performing better.

Quality of Governance in Cochin SEZ

The success or failure of any organisation depends up on the quality of the Management or the Governance. The Indian SEZs are functioning with relaxed procedures for getting clearance from various authorities. The Single Window Schemes could reduce the time and money for getting clearance from various authorities. The Development Commissioner is the key

person who would deal with all administrative matters with the cooperation of supporting staff. Their decision, attitude, services and capacity to solve various issues in Cochin SEZ are the various factors which affect the quality of governance in Cochin SEZ. For evaluating the performance of the SEZ with reference to quality of governance the relevant data is collected and presented in Table 3.

	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Highly Satisfactory
SEZ Act	15%	58%	27%
Transparency in the implementation	16%	50%	34%
Authorities Timely Decision	17%	49%	34%
Attitude of the Government Officers	15%	47%	38%
Effectiveness in providing Custom related Services	10%	48%	42%
Effectiveness in dealing with labour problems	8%	52%	40%
Effectiveness in providing Single Window Clearance	4%	36%	60%
Effectiveness in providing Banking related Services	11%	62%	27%
Effectiveness in providing Tax related Services	12%	52%	36%

Table 3 :Levels of Satisfaction of the managers about the quality of Governance in Cochin SEZ

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
 Quality of governance in Cochin SEZ is highly satisfied with the effectiveness of Single Window Scheme for getting clearance from various authorities. The majority of the respondents were satisfied in the coverage of SEZ Act, transparency in implementation, timely decision by the authority, attitude of the Government officers and effectiveness in dealing with custom related services, labour problems, banking related services and tax related services. Only few respondents were not satisfied with the quality of Governance in Cochin SEZ. The level of dissatisfaction is being low ranging from 4% to 17%. The level of satisfaction and high level of satisfaction from 36% to 62% and 27% to 60% respectively.

Frequency of visits made by authorities in different process

The main feature of Indian SEZs is the Single Window Schemes for getting clearance from various departments. Similarly there is a separate office exclusively meant for speedy clearance of various matters. Manager’s opinion about frequency of irregular visits for getting clearance from various authorities is presented in Table 4.

			frequently
Approval Process	68%	22%	10%
Acquiring Licenses	80%	18%	2%
Custom Clearance	74%	23%	3%
Labour Inspection	76%	20%	4%
Environment Inspection	82%	16%	2%
Judicial Measures	100%	-	-
Interaction with Police	100%	-	-
Interaction with Tax Authority	89%	9%	2%

Table 4: Frequency of visits made in different process (Firm perspective)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
 During the field work the researcher was given to understand that most of the managers of Cochin SEZ Units that there were no irregular payments made by them for approval process, acquiring licenses, custom clearance, labour inspection, environment inspection, judicial measures, interaction with police and interaction with tax authority. But few of the respondents have pointed out that, they had frequent visits for getting approval process, acquiring licenses, custom clearance, labour inspection, environment inspection and interaction with tax authority.

Applicability labours Laws in Cochin SEZ

Industrial peace is a Sin qua non for smooth conduct of business enterprises. SEZs are not an exemption to this diction. There are various Acts which are applicable to the Indian SEZs to deal the various issues of workers in SEZ region. **Minimum Wage Act** enacted for statutorily fixing of minimum wages to be paid for skilled and unskilled labour. **Factories Act** dealing with safety, health and welfare conditions of the labourers, in addition to the working hours, various types of leaves, holidays, overtime allowance and children employment. **Equal Remuneration Act** prescribing there is no discrimination on payment between male and female workers. **Contract Regulation and Abolition Act** dealing with the terms and conditions of contract labourers. **Industrial Dispute Act** dealing with the references to disputes to boards, tribunals and courts. **Workman Compensation Act** dealing with the amount of compensation to be paid at the time of closure of the company. Publication of working times, shifts and wage rate are dealt as per **Industrial Employment Act**. **Trade Union Act** is dealing with the formulation of trade unions and right to strike for the employee’s welfares. Provident Funds, Gratuity, Group Insurance and Compensation are coming under the purview of **Social Security Measures**. As the industrial units in SEZs are getting protection from many of the legislations like Income tax Act, custom clearance etc., there is a need for analysing as to how far the labour laws are implemented to establish industrial peace and still fulfill the objectives for which it was established. Here the researcher made an attempt to know as to whether the above mentioned labours laws were

Never Frequently Highly

applied in the Cochin SEZ for the welfare of the workers and the same is presented in table 5.

	YES	NO
Minimum Wage Act	✓	
Factory Act	✓	
Equal Remuneration Act	✓	
Contract Labour Regulation Act	✓	
Industrial Dispute Act	✓	
Workman Compensation Law	✓	
Industrial Employment Act	✓	
Social Security Act	✓	
Trade Union Act	✓	

Table 5: Applicability of various labour Laws in Cochin SEZ (Firm perspective)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
The tabulated responses received from the concerned persons shows that in the Cochin SEZ almost all labour laws like Minimum Wage Act, Factory Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Contract Labour Regulation Act, Industrial Dispute Act, Workman Compensation Law, Industrial Employment Act, Social Security Act and Trade Union Act applied and hence there were attempt to establish industrial peace in the Cochin SEZ.

Effectiveness of Labour Laws in Cochin SEZ

Separate Labour Laws are applicable to the workers working in the Indian SEZs and the Development Commissioner is responsible to handle all the labours issues with in SEZs. There is no role to the labour commissioner for handling various labour issues in Cochin SEZ. While considering this provision the researcher made an attempt to know as to whether the labour laws applied in Cochin SEZ is effectively or not, from the point of view of Cochin SEZ unit managers and the response were is presented in the table 6 for analysis.

	Highly effective	Average	Not effectiveness
Present labour laws	89%	11%	0%
Effectiveness when delegating the Labour Commissions power to the Development Commissioner	76%	24%	0%

Table 6: Effectiveness of Labour Laws applied in Cochin SEZ (Firm perspective)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
Most of the respondents revealed that present labour laws applied in the Cochin SEZ and delegating the Labour Commissioners Power to the Development Commissioner has been highly effective in Cochin SEZ. Few of the managers have agreed that the present labour laws applied in Cochin SEZ and delegating the Labour Commissions power to the Development Commissioner was moderately effective.

Follow up of Increment system in Cochin SEZ

An increment in salary means a routine increase in salary as a whole in a given period, generally every year. Commonly employers used to adopt performance based or time based or performance and time based increment

system in their organization. For the purpose of analysing the applicability of labour laws the adoption of increment system is collecting the views and presenting the same in the Table 7.

	YES
Performance based increment	36%
Time bound increment	0
Performance based and Time bound increment	64%

Table 7: Follow up of Increment system in Cochin SEZ Units (Firm perspective)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
The responses reviewed from the managers and the observation of the table shows that almost 64% of the units in Cochin SEZ are following Performance based and Time bound increment system and 36% of the units are adopting Performance based increment and none of the units are adopting the Time bound increment system.

Exemption from the State level Taxes to Units located in Cochin SEZ

Government of India as well as respective State Governments are offering fiscal incentives in the form of tax concessions and exemptions from state level taxes for development and promotion of SEZs in India. Government of India is offering tax incentives for all Indian SEZs. But the State Government tax incentives to the SEZ are varying from one State to another. Since present study being the performance evaluation of Cochin SEZ in Kerala State, the researcher attempted to study the various State level tax incentives made available to the Cochin SEZ. For this purpose the relevant data collected and presented in table 8.

	YES	NO
Sales tax	✓	
Contract tax	✓	
VAT	✓	
State Entry Tax	✓	
Stamp Duty and registration charges on land transfer	✓	
Entertainment tax		✓
Luxury Tax		✓

Table 8: Exemptions from the State Levels Taxes to Units located in Cochin SEZ

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
Managers of Cochin SEZ Units have revealed that units are eligible to get exemption on payment of Sales Tax, Contract Tax, Value Added Tax, State Entry Tax, Stamp Duty and registration charges on land transfer. But they are not eligible to get Entertainment Tax and Luxury Tax benefits from the Government of Kerala.

Subsidies in Cochin SEZ Units

SEZ is an economic area with in the domestic territory for conducting business activities with special concessions and subsidiaries. The subsidies which can be availed by the Units located in Indian SEZs are differing from one SEZ to another. Table 9 shows that

various types of subsidies could be availed to the units located in Cochin SEZ.

	YES	NO
On Land Rent	✓	
Factory Rent	✓	
On purchase of Capital Goods	✓	
On Capital Investment		✓
Interest Rate Subsidies		✓
Concessional Finance		✓

Table 9: Provision of Subsidies available to the units located in Cochin SEZ

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
The observation of the table clearly shows that units located in Cochin SEZ are eligible to get subsidies on payment of land rent, factory rent and on payment of capital goods. Due to these subsidy benefits the units are required to pay concessional rate of rent on land as well as factory to the Cochin SEZ developers. But there is no subsidy on Capital Investment, interest rate subsidies and concessional Finance for running business entity in Cochin SEZ.

Working hours in Cochin SEZ

Factories Act deals with the duration of working hours for business concerns and the units in the Cochin SEZ are applying these provision in their concerns. While considering that the researcher had interview with the workers about the working hours in Cochin SEZ Units and the same is presented in table 10.

Working hours	Percentage of workers
Up to 8	19%
8 to 10	76%
11 to 13	5%
Above 13	Nil

Table 10: Working hours in Cochin SEZ (Workers point of view)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
Most of the workers informed that the average working hours per day is 8 to 10 hours and 5% of the respondents only informed that their working hours are more than 10 hours. This shows that act pertaining to working hours is adhered to.

Basic facilities in Cochin SEZ

The Employers have to provide various facilities to employee’s to satisfy them which includes food, accommodation, medical, insurance and good working conditions. The table VII.30 is presented for finding out as to whether all these facilities available to the workers on Cochin SEZ.

Basic Facilities	YES	NO
Food	27%	73%
Accommodation	6%	94%
Medical Reimbursement facility	52%	48%
Insurance for Industrial Accidents	54%	46%
Sanitary Facilities at working place	68%	32%
Drinking Water	100%	0%
Adequate Ventilation Facilities at work place	78%	22%
Lighting arrangements at working place	84%	16%
Training Facilities	86%	14%
Leaves	82%	18%

Table 11: Basic facilities providing to employees in Cochin SEZ (Workers point of view)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
The observation of the table shows that most of the workers in Cochin SEZ have revealed that the units are providing various basic facilities which include insurance for industrial accidents, sanitary facilities at working place, drinking water, training facilities, different types of leave, medical reimbursement facility, adequate ventilation and lighting facilities at the work place. During the field work researcher understood that some of the units in Cochin SEZ are offering food and accommodation facilities to their employees.

Workers Training in Cochin SEZ

Well trained workers are required for the successful functioning of any business entity. Training facilities adopted in the organisation differ from one entity to another and training facilities are mainly based on nature and size of the employment. Table 12 shows the various modes of training facilities adopted by the Industrial units located in Cochin SEZ.

	YES	NO
Send employees to foreign countries	4%	96%
Send employees to other zones	2%	98%
Within the Zone	96%	4%
Foreign technician visiting the company	12%	88%

Table 12: Mode of Training offered (Workers point of view)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
In Cochin SEZ units the workers are mainly undergoing training within the Zone and rarely the trainings are offered in foreign countries or in the other Zones in same country. In some of the cases the foreign technician visiting the Cochin SEZ units are used for giving training to the employees working in Cochin SEZ,

Additional Remunerations in Cochin SEZ

Fair remuneration is one of the factors which determine the performance of the employees in any organization. Employers have been providing remuneration to their employees at the time of employment and also at the retirement period. The package of remuneration may differ from one employer to another. Table 13 shows the details of additional remuneration provided to the Cochin SEZ workers.

	YES	NO
Bonus	68%	32%
Provident Funds	92%	8%
Double Rate for Over time	26%	74%

Table 13: Details of Additional Remuneration offered in the Cochin SEZ (Workers point of view)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
During the field work the researcher observed that majority of the worker respondent were getting Bonus and Provident Fund benefits from their employers and only a few workers have agreed they were getting Double the Wage Rate for Overtime Work.

Working Conditions in Cochin SEZ

Employees remunerations, working hours, training, skills development, leave and holiday entitlement are the various factors considered for maintaining core relationship between employer and employees. The level of satisfaction of the workers is based on the quality of services provided by the employers. The units in the Cochin SEZ are the employers providing the various services to their employees. The researcher analysed the level of satisfaction of the employees about the working conditions available in Cochin SEZ. The responses received in this regards are presented in table 14.

Working conditions	Most Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied
Minimum Wages	20%	48%	32%
Additional remuneration	8%	51%	41%
Holiday entitlement	2%	7%	91%
Leave	15%	54%	31%
Total Working Hours	24%	46%	30%
Working Time	36%	42%	22%
Training	34%	43%	23%
Skill Development	2%	14%	84%
Safety measures	33%	64%	3%
Equal treatment	41%	56%	3%

Table 14: Workers satisfaction level with working conditions in Cochin SEZ (Workers views)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
 The maximum level of dissatisfaction 91% and 84% were on holiday entitlement and skill development. Majority of the workers in Cochin SEZ have been satisfied with the minimum wages, additional remuneration, availing leave, total working hours, working time, training, safety measures and equal treatment. There are cases of most satisfied also and that shows the working conditions by and large satisfactory.

Health conditions of Cochin SEZ workers

In the competitive work environment stress is normal, excessive stress can interfere with workers’ productivity and impact in their physical and emotional conditions. Therefore with a view of finding out the health conditions of the workers in Cochin SEZ, the researcher collected the responses and presented in table 15.

	YES	NO
Stress due to deadline	23%	77%
Developed any health problem	12%	88%

Table 15: Health conditions of workers in Cochin SEZ (Workers point of view)

Sources: Primary data collected during the field study
 Majority of workers employed in the Cochin SEZ Units are free from stress and they reveal that there is no health problem due to being employed in Cochin SEZ units. Only a small 23% of the workers reported that they are facing stress due deadline and similarly they had some health problem due to prevailing working

condition in Cochin SEZ. Worker respondents revealed that the Cochin SEZ units are taking precautionary measures to safeguard the interest of workers in Cochin SEZ.

Conclusion

Primary data were collected to measure the performance of Cochin SEZ. Here the researcher considered infrastructural facilities offered in the Cochin SEZ, Governance in Cochin SEZ, application of Labour Laws to the workers in Cochin SEZ units, incentives and subsidies provided to the Cochin SEZ units and various facilities offered to the workers in Cochin SEZ units. Facilities for exclusively arrangement of water and power, water purifier, effluent treatment, telecommunication facilities, power plant scheme, storage, hotel, dispensary, post office and banking services were the various infrastructure facilities offered in the Cochin SEZ to their stake holders. Managers in Cochin SEZ units were satisfied with the quality of infrastructure facilities and quality of governance prevailed in Cochin SEZ. Exemption from the payment of Sales Tax, Contract Tax, VAT, State Entry Tax, Stamp Duty and registration charges on land transfer are the various State level tax exemption availed to the Cochin SEZ unit. Similarly Cochin SEZ units can avail subsidies on land rent, factory rent and on purchase of capital goods. As per mangers the present Labour Laws applied in Cochin SEZ were functioning effectively. Cochin SEZ unit workers agreed that they are enjoying various basic facilities which include medical reimbursement, bonus, commission, insurance for industrial accidents, leaves, sanitary and training facilities within SEZ. The training facilities are mainly undertaking within Cochin SEZ and workers in Cochin SEZ were satisfied with minimum wages, additional remunerations, leaves available, total working hours, training, safety measures and equal treatment.

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