

COURT HEAD WORKS FROM HIS OFFICIAL CAR IN THE ABSENCE OF AN OFFICE

India's top PF court operates from this Amby

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FROM A distance, the car in the picture — parked outside Mayur Bhawan in CP — is just another Ambassador. But get closer and ask the occupants, and you find that it's much more than that. It's a courtroom, believe it or not.

The Employees Provident Fund Appellate Tribunal, India's top court dealing with PF disputes from across the country, has been functioning from the car for more than three months now. It has been like this ever since a fire on Octo-

ber 6 destroyed its office in the ninth floor of Mayur Bhawan. The car is the official vehicle of the tribunal head or the presiding officer, as he is known.

And this is how the court in the car functions: the tribunal head and his stenographer sit on the rear seat. The lawyer positions himself on the front seat, near the driver's, and turns back to make submissions.

When approached by *Hindustan Times*, tribunal head R.L. Koli refused to comment. "He is not authorised to speak," a staff said. Sources, however, said Koli has repeatedly requested the Centre to allot an al-



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The car that doubles up as a courtroom for Provident Fund disputes.

ternate site for the tribunal.

Sources in Central PF Commissioners Office said the tribunal had

stopped functioning after the fire and claimed "it operated from a car only on three or four days". But HT found at least two lawyers appear before the "court" on Monday.

Is working from his official car a form of protest by Koli? The lawyers do not think so. They are impressed with his sincerity.

Advocate P. Vinay Kumar said, "What can he do if he doesn't have an office? He is still managing to hear urgent matters. This is the height of government apathy."

Another lawyer said that similar forums are housed in posh hotels.

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