

Scaling Heights in Blue Uniforms

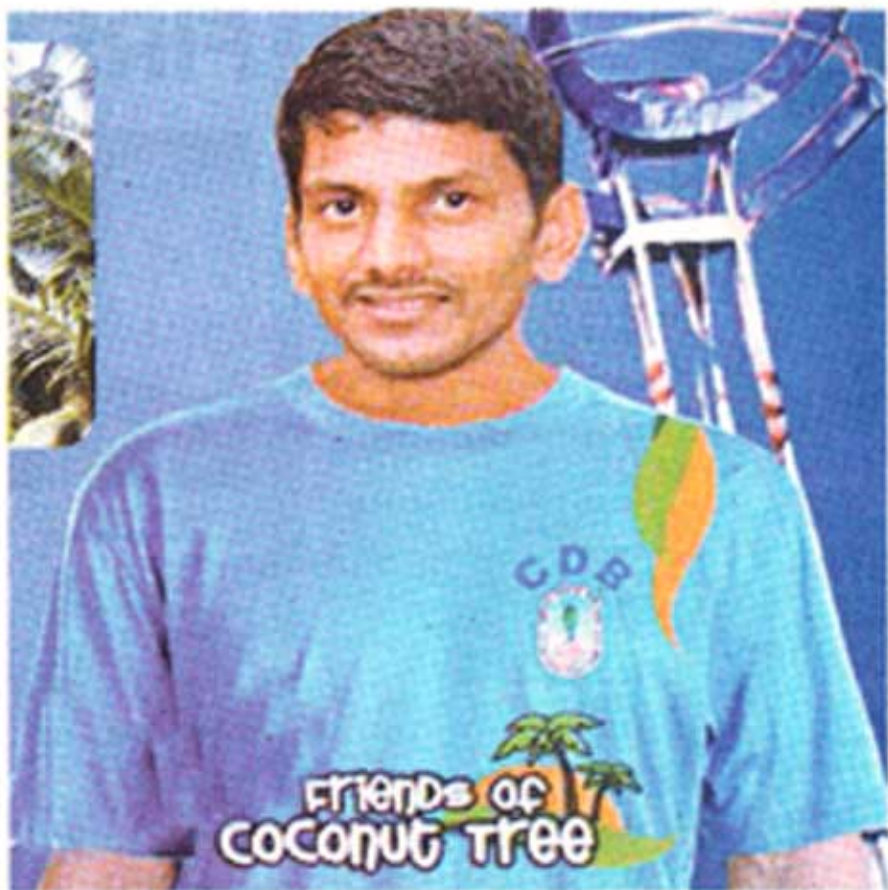
Uniforms will be given free-of-cost to all coconut pluckers who have passed 'Friends of Coconut' training programme

by Amritha K R

Kochi: If the latest of the Coconut Development Board's proposals go through, you might just find your yesteryear lungied, sickle bearing coconut plucker racing to your coconut field in a dashing motor-bike spotting a brilliant blue uniform.

A pair of uniforms will be supplied free-of-cost to all coconut pluckers who have passed the 'Friends of Coconut' training programme. The CDB will invite tenders for the uniforms in a month's time.

On the other hand, subsidies will be given to purchase motor bikes. The project is to be undertaken within this month end. "It is part of our efforts to bring dignity to the profession. Without dignity no one will stick on to this job and that would mean that coconut cultivation will not survive in the state. So here we are looking for an image makeover for coconut plucker," said T



The proposed uniform for 'Friends of Coconut Tree'

K Jose, chairman, Coconut Development Board.

The uniforms will be in three sizes, small, medium and large. The CDB proposes to join the 'Friends of Coconut' programme with the Coconut Producers' Society (CPS). Each CPS

consist of about 40-100 members with a total of about 5,000 palms under them. The CPS units work together as a collective unit sharing machinery, conducting harvesting, manuring and selling thereby minimising wastage and production

cost and increasing profits for the farmer. It is here that the 'Friends of Coconut' comes in.

The 'Friends of Coconut' will go in groups and undertake the entire plucking of a particular society. The producers' societies can, in turn, book for respective particular groups of 'Friends of Coconut' farmers in their particular areas since the phone numbers, location and other details of all the coconut farmers are made available on the website.

"The training of 'Friends of Coconut' includes coconut harvesting operations, crown cleaning, spraying and pest control, pollination and hybridisation techniques, identification of nuts etc. It is only through largescale operations that they will be able to make use of the training," said CDB public relations officer Mini John. This will also enable 'Friends of Coconut' to act as agents to identify areas for largescale procurement of nuts for the Coconut Board.