

Coconut tree climbers a click away

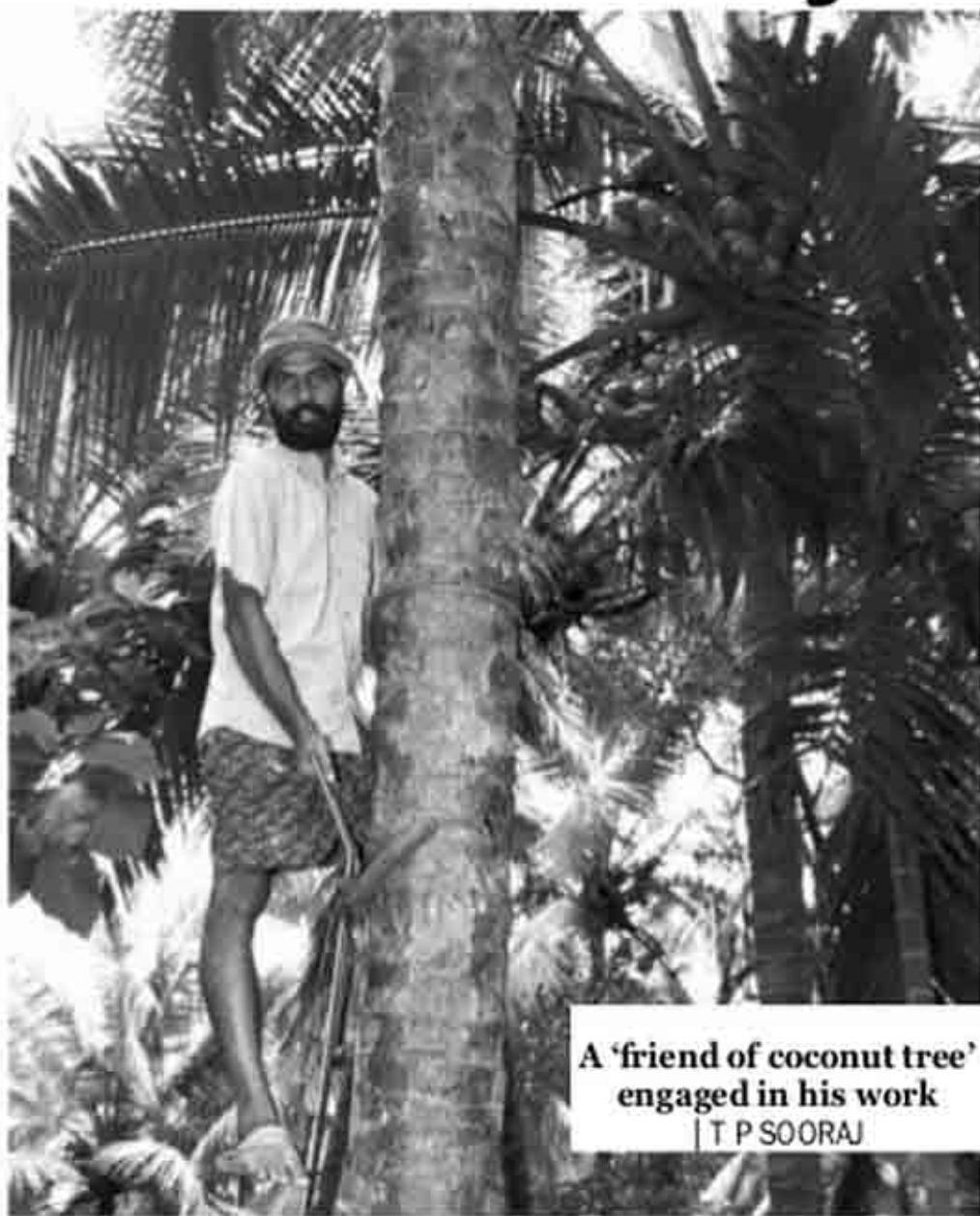
The 'Friends of Coconut Tree, 'a massive coconut tree climbers' training programme launched by the Coconut Development Board (CDB) to revamp the agricultural sector, is becoming a progressive job trend in the state. As the project completes its successful three years, of the 30,090 Friends of Coconut Tree who came out with flying colours, 2,496 are from Kozhikode district.

CDB considers under-employed healthy persons in the age group of 18-40, with a minimum education of up to class seven, for the training that is conducted in batches of a minimum of 20 per week. Technical, financial, managerial and practical lessons are imparted in this residential training programme.

The effective intervention of the Coconut Development Board changed not only the attitude of the youth towards this job, but also people's approach to the tree climbers. Now, coconut tree climbers are available just a phone call or mouse click away. If the booking can be done a week in advance, it will be helpful for the Friends of Coconut Tree to schedule their work time. "Every day we have to cover at least 50 to 60 houses. Unless we plan properly, the timely harvest of the crop will be affected," says a Friend of Coconut Tree, Raveendran from Kozhikode.

In Kozhikode district, training is provided mainly in three centres - United Federation, Punnor; Ujjaiyini Cultural Centre, Koyilandy; and Thripathi CPF, Kuttikadavu, near Peruvayal. One of the master trainers, P C Vinod from Balussery, says, "The traditional mode of tree climbing was highly time-consuming, compared to that of the device-assisted one. There are modern coconut tree climbers who earn around ₹30,000 per month."

On the money they charge for



A 'friend of coconut tree' engaged in his work

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each palm, Technical Officer with the Kozhikode Coconut Development Board, K Mridula, says, "It is up to them to charge a reasonable rate or exorbitant rate. We hardly interfere in such matters as we are only supposed to provide them a platform to find employment.

"So far we have received a good feedback from the farmers who have made use of their service. Those who could harvest only once in three months are now happy that the trained group helps them harvest in time." Adding to it she says, "Surprising results brought by Friends of Coconut Tree prove that any job sector can be adopted in the same way to solve

the shortage of labourers."

The objectives behind formulating the group were imparting training to a group of unemployed youth in developing technical skill, entrepreneurship capacity, leadership qualities and communication skills to address the needs of coconut growers, make them self-reliant and instil confidence in undertaking the responsibility of Friends of Coconut Tree and to tackle the problem of unavailability of coconut tree climbers for coconut farming and plant protection activities. Those who are interested in making use of their services can log on to www.coconutboard.nic.in to get their phone numbers.