

# Harvest-training scheme: Coconut Board nears target

**Our Bureau**

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Friends of Coconut Tree, a new scheme introduced by the Coconut Development Board to develop a group of young professionals for harvest of and plant-protection operations for coconut, is getting encouraging response in the State.

According to the board's officials, already the number of participants in the training programme has reached 4,190 as on Tuesday; the board has set a target of training 5,000 unemployed youth by March, covering 10 coconut-growing districts of Kerala. The board has fixed Rs 15 as wage for climbing a 40-ft tree and Rs 20 for over 40-ft trees in villages, and Rs 20 for any tree in the urban areas. As part of extending the pro-

gramme to other States, the board has also started imparting training to 20 youths in Maharashtra.

The programme coverage includes climbing techniques, harvest, pollination and plant-protection measures and entrepreneurship development skills. The training will be conducted in batches of a minimum of 20 for a week and will be residential. The training includes technical, managerial and practical sessions.

## **ACUTE SHORTAGE**

Though the board is also training unemployed youth in coconut-palm-climbing, there is a reluctance to enter this field because of the occupational risk and the arduous labour involved in climbing tall trees. However, in the recent past an array of climbing

devices have been developed, which are claimed to be safe and easy to operate. Despite all these efforts, there is still an acute shortage of trained coconut-palm climbers for harvest and plant-protection activities.

With a view to tackle this problem, the board started the training program to develop special skills and confidence in coconut-palm-climbing and plant protection for the benefit of the coconut community as a whole, officials of the board said.

Coconut-tree climbers are a rarity these days in Kerala and other growing States of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Goa, with few taking up the traditional profession.

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