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Title : Need to take suitable steps to check spreading of Criophydmite, a coconut disease in coastal areas of Orissa.

SHRI B. MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Coconut farmers in the coastal districts of Orissa are facing a serious problem because of the Criophydmite, which has been spreading its tentacles around the coconut plants. As a result, coconut plants which are considered as an asset are on their way to become a liability for the coconut growers. There was a time when coconut growers and copra was being sent to far off places. But the business today is in doldrums as many coconut plants have failed to bear fruit this year due to the pest attack.

Even if the coconut grows on the affected plants, they become dry and get covered with black spots. Besides, their size and quality get affected. According to reports, hybrid coconut plants are most prone to the mite attack.

After the super cyclone in 1999, many plants had been uprooted for which the Government and other organisations had provided thousands of hybrid coconut saplings from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. But Orissa farmers' expectations have now been shattered. Kochi based Coconut Development Board is aware of this problem. Last year the Union Government had sanctioned around Rs. 1.6 lakh to combat the problem, but the fund has not been utilised to find a solution to the problem.

The Government should come forward with sufficient fund and provide expertise to find a solution to the problem of coconut farmers of Orissa.