

Now, neera bait for gullible investors

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI, JULY 15

After the goat-teak-mangium schemes, it's now the turn of neera, non-alcoholic drink from coconut tree, to become the bait for gullible people to invest their money in. Trivandrum-based Kerala People's Forum (KPF) which claims to be an organisation working for a 'poison-free Kerala', has solicited people to invest 'any property a coconut sugar project with Central government subsidies up to ₹50 lakh'.

While the advertisement specifically solicits investment, the organisation's helpdesk told DC that the KPF will arrange tie-ups with farmers in Kambam, Theni and Pollachi districts of Tamil Nadu

● **The CDB has cautioned people against falling prey to companies which such promises and losing their property and investment.**

where neera licenses are easy to come. "Anyone can tap neera, convert it into sugar and sell it," the person said. "You can get about 1,000 coconut trees for about ₹10 lakh for two years. Anyone can tap neera and make coconut sugar out of it. We have a buy-back arrangement with them, and hence the investor's money is safe." He, however, refused to answer how many farmers the organisation has tied up in Tamil Nadu for the projects. He charged the Coconut Development Board (CDB) with neera

sugar production a high-technology project "whereas one can produce neera sugar by just heating." The organisation claimed it will make and distribute value-added products from neera but did not say if it has any specific projects for the same.

Meanwhile, the CDB has cautioned people against falling prey to companies which such promises and losing their property and investment. "The Central government subsidy for neera projects are available only to coconut producer companies, which are the apex bodies of the three-level farmer cooperatives and affiliated to the CDB," a board has said. "It will be given to the companies after careful assessment of their projects."