

# Govt, coconut board lock horns over Neera project

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**Malappuram:** The state government and Coconut Development Board (CDB) under the Union ministry of agriculture are locked in a duel over the prestigious project launched by state government to produce and market 'Neera'.

After CDB's argument that the Kerala State Coconut Development Corporation (KSCDC) is a defunct body and has no facilities to produce and market Neera in state, Kerala government and KSCDC alleged that the CDB is trying to sabotage projects of the corporation to develop 'Neera' through societies across the state.

The CDB is a statutory body established in 1981 by an Act of Parliament with the exclusive mandate of looking after the integrated

development of coconut culture and industry. The KSCDC was created by state government in 1975 with an aim to facilitate development of coconut farming in the state.

In a statement, the CDB said KSCDC was a defunct body as per the records of registrar of companies and the corporation did not have backward linkages with the farmers at the grassroots level to tap, collect and process Neera, which requires skill and coordination at all levels.

But, the state government and KSCDC ruled out CDB's arguments, saying those were baseless allegations.

Talking on CDB's allegations, agriculture minister K P Mohanan said the a state cabinet meeting held on March 2014 had revived the

KSCDC and the corporation was one of the five agencies allowed to produce and market Neera in state.

"It is mysterious that CDB is coming up against the corporation's move to develop Neera. The Board cannot stand against the government's decision and the corporation will go ahead with its plan to set up Neera processing plants and societies," the minister said.

The CDB issued the clarification last week, in response to reports that KSCDC was planning to form Neera societies in all panchayats.

The statement said the corporation was irrelevant as the coconut board had initiated programmes for introducing Neera since 2011, by forming three-tier system of farmer producer organizations.