

Business Standard

Keralites shun work that migrants lap up

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Even as the registered unemployed in Kerala touches 4.5 million, nearly 200,000 jobs involving tapping a popular health drink from coconut trees has few takers amongst Keralites.

The job of "neera technicians" can fetch over Rs.40,000 a month with pension and other benefits, the Coconut Development Board (CDB) said here on Friday.

But this work was now being cornered by workers from West Bengal, Bihar and the northeast, CDB said in a statement.

"At the moment there are two lakh vacancies for this job in the 417 registered neera producing societies," it said.

Many migrant workers were earning as much as as Rs.44,000 a month by becoming "successful neera technicians", the CDB said.

Neera is tapped from the bunch of the coconut tree. It is sweet and a proven health drink.

The neera technician has to climb the coconut tree and, using a special knife, has to slice the bunch. The liquid that comes out is collected in a pot.

This is moved to collection centres and then to the neera production centres.

It only needs eight hours of training to become a neera technician, the CDB said. The starting salary is Rs.20,000 a month.

Labour Minister Shibhu Baby John said it was surprising that Keralites pay a lot of money as recruitment fees to go to the Middle East but earn a third of what a neera technician get in Kerala.