

Neera tapping gets the go-ahead

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KOCHI: The State government on Tuesday decided to permit tapping of neera, the unfermented sap made from coconut palm, across Kerala after a meeting of all stakeholders convened by Minister of Excise K. Babu took a decision to this effect. *The Hindu* had reported on Monday on the impending decision.

The meeting decided that neera tapping can be allowed at least in one unit consisting of 1,500 coconut trees in a district across

the State. In Kollam, Pathanamthitta and Thiruvananthapuram districts where no toddy tapping is taking place now, more than one unit can be allowed to tap neera.

Earlier, a high level committee had been constituted, headed by the State Excise Commissioner, to study the possibilities and prospects of starting neera business in the State.

Tuesday's meeting was convened in the background of the committee recommending that there was no hurdle to opening

Abkari laws will be amended to enable production of neera

up tapping and marketing of neera, provided it was done under strict supervision.

Special Correspondent reports from

Thiruvananthapuram:

Mr. Babu told a meeting of toddy tappers in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday that the production of neera to be implemented in units of 1,500 coconut

trees in each district initially would be a pilot project. The Abkari laws would be amended for production of neera, he told the meeting.

The Minister said the permission for producing neera would be given only to companies and federations affiliated to the Coconut Development Board. Toddy tappers would be given preference in tapping coconut trees for neera. Also, neera technicians would be given membership in the Toddy Tappers' Welfare Fund Board.