

Neera: amendment to Abkari rules soon

Special Correspondent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The government has signalled its intention to clear the legal hurdles for the commercial production of neera, a non-alcoholic health drink made from the sap produced by coconut flowers.

Excise Minister K. Babu said here on Wednesday that the Abkari rules would be amended within weeks to allow production and sale of neera.

He was addressing a meeting organised by the Kerala Agricultural University to launch its brand of neera named Keraamrutham. Mr. Babu said the government had in principle granted licence to KAU for experimental production and marketing of neera.

Earlier launching Keraamrutham, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said the government would protect the interests of toddy tappers while promoting commercial

production of neera. "We have addressed the concerns raised by toddy tappers. The government will ensure that neera production does not affect their livelihood."

He said neera provided an opportunity for coconut farmers in Kerala to enhance their income.

M. P. Vincent, MLA, presided over the function. Thomas Unniyadan, MLA, district panchayat vice-president Rufus Daniel, Excise Commissioner Anil Xavier, Director of Agriculture R. Ajithkumar, KAU Vice-Chancellor Dr. P. Rajendran, Director of Research V. K. Raju, executive committee members P. A. Salam and Sony Sebastian and Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, Dr. L. Rajamony were present on the occasion.

KAU has developed methods for the extraction of neera and standardised the technology for arresting the fermentation of the sap and its preservation. With a shelf life of more than three months



Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and Excise Minister K. Babu at a function organised by Kerala Agricultural University to launch its brand of neera named Keraamrutham in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday.

under refrigeration, Keraamrutham will be promoted as a health drink nutritionally superior to tender coconut water. The university is setting up three pilot plants at Peelikode in Kasaragod district, Vellanikara in Thrissur and

Vellayani in Thiruvananthapuram, for manufacture of neera.

KAU has also developed the technology for production of coconut palm jaggery (Kerachakkara) and palm honey as allied products.