

# 'Neera Production Won't Harm Toddy Tappers'

**Express News Service**

**Kollam:** The production of 'Neera' will not affect the job of toddy tappers, Minister for Fisheries, Ports and Excise K Babu said while laying the stone for the first neera producing plant in the district at Mainagappally.

Babu said that the government would not do anything to harm the interest of the toddy workers, allaying their fears that the new product would be detrimental to their job prospects. Neera, the sweet toddy tapped from the inflorescence of coconut palm, the production and distribution of which is being planned by the state, is expected to boost the income of coconut farmers. The plant will be set up by Kaipuzha Coconut Producers' Company Limited (KCPCL) at an estimated cost of ₹20 crore.

"It is expected to begin operation by July 15. When it begins to function, KCPCL would be the first among 11 such companies to market the product," Shajahan Kanjiravilayil, chairman, KCPCL said.

The company authorities said that the plant would produce neera, byproducts of neera, packed tender coconut water, cream from the kernel, kernel powder, edible oil, hair tonic, biscuits, chocolate, jam and ice cream, which will be produced from coconut.

The plant will process 10,000 litres of neera at the initial stage from its 1.5 acres of land. For the training of neera technicians at the district-level, eight master technicians are being trained at the Coconut Development Board's Institute of Technology in Aluva. These trainers

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**Minister K Babu has also assured that the production of the sweet toddy will enhance the income of the coconut farmers**

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will be used for training the company's technicians. The government has in principle given consent for tapping 1,500 coconut palms for the company.

On a complaint that not enough coconut palms were available for neera extraction as the Excise Department had been slow in granting licence, Babu said that only a few districts had started marking coconut palms for the purpose of tapping and it should not be treated as the department's fault.

Kodikunnil Suresh inaugurated the public meet and Kovoovur Kunjumon MLA, presided over the function.

A logo presentation of the byproducts of neera was displayed by Labour Minister Shibu Baby John.