

Chief Minister to Launch Neera Officially on Sunday

Express News Service

Kochi: Chief Minister Oommen Chandy will officially launch Neera, the sweet toddy made from coconut and its value-added products at a function to be held at BCM College auditorium in Kottayam on Sunday. The CM will also distribute Neera tapping licences to Coconut Producers Federations at the function.

Excise Minister K Babu will preside over the function organised jointly by the Co-

conut Development Board and the Excise Department. Finance Minister K M Mani will deliver the keynote address.

Forests Minister Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan will distribute the certificates to Neera technicians while Agriculture Minister K P Mohanan will launch the Neera production equipment. Kottayam MP Jose K Mani will distribute the awards to the best Neera technicians on the occasion. T K Jose, chairman, Coconut Development

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Board (CDB) will speak about Neera and its value-added products and R K Sreekumar Chettiyar, Additional Excise Commissioner (in-charge) will brief about Neera rules.

The state government had

issued the order permitting the production of Neera on February 3 and sanction was given for tapping the sweet toddy through seven agencies.

These include the Farmer Producer Organisations formed under the aegis of the CDB. The board has been making fervent pleas to the state governments since 2005 to permit the production of Neera, which is a zero per cent alcohol drink made from coconut, after realising that its production will en-

sure better income for coconut farmers.

This development is the outcome of the concerted efforts of the Departments of Tax, Excise and Agriculture, the Kerala Agricultural University, Registered Farmer Producer Organisations in the coconut sector and the CDB. CDB has already been permitted to tap Neera from 250 coconut palms for research purpose and the technology for preservation and commercialisation has been standardised.