

Neera: Excise Dept to Issue Licences

T'Puram: Clearing the muddle over Neera, the State Government on Monday decided that the Excise Department will issue the licences for neera production in the state. The Neera Board will be brought under the control of the Agriculture Department and will be renamed 'Nalikera-Neera Board' with the Agriculture Production Commissioner as chairman. 'Toddy Board' will be formed with the Taxes Secretary as chairman to protect the interests of toddy tappers, according to decisions taken at a meeting convened by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy to resolve the disputes that existed between the Agriculture and Excise departments over Neera or sweet toddy. The Excise Commissioner will be the convener of both boards.

It was also decided that all farmer federations that have applied for a neera licence should be issued one. The government has vested the Excise Department with the right to issue the licence to prevent misuse. Sweet toddy undergoes natural fermentation within a few hours of extraction and turns into toddy which contains alcohol. Briefing the media, Excise Minister K Babu and Agriculture Minister K P Mohanan said that 174 licences have been issued so far and the remaining applications will be settled soon. ENS