



## New grass species named after Kovai scientist

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COIMBATORE: A scientist from Indian Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), Coimbatore, C Kunhikannan (55) is elated as a newly discovered grass species in Rajasthan has been named after his nomenclature as a mark of honour for his contributions to forest ecology and plant biodiversity in India.

Named 'Iseilema kunhikannanii', the grass species was found in the Bundi forest division in Rajasthan and sources state it is a fodder for wild animals in the forest division.

An thrilled Kunhikannan said, "It is the greatest honour that I could possibly ever receive for my work in the field."

The man who was born in Kerala presently heads the committee for rehabilitation and reclamation plan for iron ore mines in three districts of Karnataka. He explained that project is to reclaim waste material from mines as a near-natural system. The IFGTB scientist has published nearly 44 papers including four books.

Currently settled in Coimbatore, he also conducted a study titled "Survey and Documentation of Photo Diversity In and Around Singanallur Lake" in collaboration with the Centre for Urban Biodiversity Conservation and Education (CUBE) and Coimbatore City Municipal Corporation (CCMC). The study documented the presence of 453 plant species at the Singanallur lake and of them 328 were medicinal plants.

Kunhikannan said he has also conducted a study on natural regeneration at Kerala's Silent Valley and a species recovery research on present species of medicinal plants in the Medicinal Plants Conservation Area in Silent Valley and Kolli Hills in Namakkal.

Three scholars have completed PhD under his guidance, he added.

Forest Survey of India Deputy Ranger, Central Zone, Nagpur, K Chandramohan told TNIE that he identified the grass in Rajasthan in September 2018.

"Earlier, there were only seven grass species across India that come under Iseilema genes. Now, the grass discovered in Rajasthan is the eighth species found in our country. The research was conducted simultaneously to study the features of the grass species."

Chandramohan said he wanted to name the grass after an ecological expert who has contributed much to the ecology. Hence, Kunhikannan's name was used after getting his consent.

"If we follow the idea of naming new flora species after an Indian scientist's name, it would encourage them to do more research," he added.

Chandramohan acknowledged Director General of Forest Survey of India Subhash Ashutosh, Regional Directors of Central Zone-Nagpur and Northern Zone-Shimla, P Subramanyam and Shimla Sushant Sharma, for their support during the survey.

Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2020/feb/27/new-grass-species-named-after-kovai-scientist-2109267.html>