

# Pyrostria laljii

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**In news-** A team of researchers from India and the Philippines recently discovered a 15-meter-tall tree that belongs to the genus of the coffee family from the Andaman Islands.

## **About the tree-**

- *Pyrostria* is a genus of dioecious flowering plants in the **family Rubiaceae**.
- Most of the species are **endemic to Madagascar**, others occur on islands in the western Indian Ocean (Mauritius, Comoros, Réunion, Rodrigues, Socotra), a few are found in continental Africa, and only six species occur in tropical Southeast Asia.
  - The new species, *Pyrostria laljii*, is the **first record of the genus Pyrostria in India**.
- The tree is distinguished by a **long stem with a whitish coating on the trunk**, and oblong-ovate leaves with a cuneate base.
- It was **first reported from South Andaman's Wandoor forest**.
- The other places in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands where the tree could be located are the **Tirur forest near the Jarawa Reserve Forest and the Chidia Tapu (Munda Pahar) forest**.
- The discovery is **unique as the species is a big tree** and yet has not been recorded as a new species.\
- Other physical features that distinguish the tree from other species of the genus is its **umbellate inflorescence with 8-12 flowers**.

- The colour of the flowers varies from white to cream, and turns brown after pollination.
- It has been assessed as '**Critically Endangered**' in the IUCN Red List.
- The other plants from the family Rubiaceae that are common in India are cinchona, coffee, adina, hamelia, ixora, galium, gardenia, mussaenda, rubia, morinda.
- The researchers have also discovered a **new species of pokeweed named *Rivina andamanensis*** growing under large trees, shaded and rocky areas, along with herbs and shrubby plants.
- It is the **first record of the pokeweed family *Petiveriaceae*** in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.