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Cycas beddomei Dyer: An Endemic and Endangered Indian Medicinal Plant

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Abstract : Herbal medicines are gaining importance due to holistic nature and lesser side effects. Cycas beddomei Dyer is one of the highly exploited medicinal plants in India. Due to over-exploitation of male and female cones, young leaves and starch-bearing pithy stems for edible, medicinal and socio-cultural practices by the locals, tribals and traders, the plant population has drastically declined in its natural habitats. Cycas beddomei is an endemic to India. The current IUCN status of this plant species in the wild is endangered. Perhaps, it is the only species of Cycas enlisted in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora). Endorsing the CITES decisions, the Government of India has placed C. beddomei in the “Negative List of Exports” during 1998. Though this plant has been banned legally, but illegally, it is highly exploited by different means. Therefore, conservation of this species is an urgent need of the hour. The present paper highlights unique morphological and anatomical characters of C. beddomei, along with its present status, major threats and conservation measures. Cycas beddomei can easily be identified by some of the distinguishing morphological and anatomical characters, viz., 2–4 mm wide leaflets with revolute margins; the apices of microsporophylls from the middle to apex of the pollen cones turn downwards on maturity; mucilage canal cells are seen in the midrib region of the leaflets; stomatal frequency is about 18 numbers at 250x; pollen grains are monocolpate and their diameter ranging from 22.5 to 30 µm.

Keywords : CITES, Cycas beddomei, endangered, endemic
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