Wayanad farmer Suraj Purushothaman gets Plant Genome Saviour award

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News

The 22nd Foundation Day of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPVFRA) and the Plant Genome Saviour Award ceremony were held in New Delhi on 12 November 2026. Dr P.K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, addressed the function, which also marked 25 years of the PPV&FR Act, 2001. Among the awardees is 28-year-old Suraj Purushothaman of Chirakkambath Illam, Mathamangalam near Sulthan Bathery in Keralam's Wayanad district, who conserves about 650 vegetable varieties – including 180 of tomato, 70 of brinjal and 60 of green chilli – on a five-acre family farm; his award carries ₹1 lakh and a citation. Mishra noted that India has 22 agro-biodiversity hotspots, that nearly half the varieties registered with the Authority are farmers' varieties, and that the National Genebank at ICAR-NBPGR is the world's second largest. 'An award honours a farmer once; a seed chain, a market and a fair share of benefits sustain the farmer every season,' he said. He also cited Koraput (Odisha), recognised by FAO in 2012 as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS), and the roughly 3,000 climate-resilient crop varieties developed under the National Agricultural Research System.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Event	PPVFRA 22nd Foundation Day – 12 Nov 2026, New Delhi

Point	Details
Address by	Dr P.K. Mishra – Principal Secretary to PM
Law	PPV&FR Act 2001 – 25 years
Awardee	Suraj Purushothaman, Mathamangalam (Wayanad) – ~650 vegetable varieties
Award amounts	Community ₹10 lakh; Farmer Reward ₹1.5 lakh; Recognition ₹1 lakh
Ministry	Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
Genebank	ICAR-NBPGR, New Delhi – world's 2nd largest
Hotspots	22 agro-biodiversity hotspots in India

Background

- Legal background: the WTO's TRIPS Agreement (Art. 27.3(b)) requires protection of plant varieties by patents or a 'sui generis' system. India's PPV&FR Act, 2001 does this while recognising farmers' rights alongside breeders' rights – farmers may save, use, share and sell (unbranded) seed even of a protected variety. It is often described as a unique law in the world.
- The Authority: set up in 2005 under the Act, PPVFRA functions in New Delhi under the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. Plant Genome Saviour awards are paid from the National Gene Fund: Community Award (₹10 lakh), Farmer Reward (₹1.5 lakh) and Farmer Recognition (₹1 lakh). The aim is to encourage tribal and rural communities that conserve traditional varieties.
- International context: India is party to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), adopted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2001; India hosted its Governing Body session in New Delhi in 2022. Wayanad is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and is known for tribal traditional rice and tuber varieties; Padma Shri Cheruvayal Raman, who died in October 2026, also conserved Wayanad's traditional paddy.

Tamil Nadu link: The Plant Genome Saviour Community Award for 2010-11 went to the Tamil Nadu Hill Banana Growers' Federation, Pattiveeranpatti (Dindigul district), and the 'Deepaoli' Women's Self Help Group of Pudu Pattu village, Tiruvannamalai district, has also been a Community Award winner. The Chennai-based M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation runs a Community Agrobiodiversity Centre at Puthoorvayal in Wayanad.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

The 22nd Foundation Day of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPVFRA) and the Plant Genome Saviour Award ceremony were held in New Delhi on 12 November 2026.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Event: PPVFRA 22nd Foundation Day – 12 Nov 2026, New Delhi; Address by: Dr P.K. Mishra – Principal Secretary to PM; Law: PPV&FR Act 2001 – 25 years; Awardee: Suraj Purushothaman, Mathamangalam (Wayanad) – ~650 vegetable varieties.

What is the background to this news?

Legal background: the WTO's TRIPS Agreement (Art. 27.3(b)) requires protection of plant varieties by patents or a 'sui generis' system.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. India enacted the PPV&FR Act, 2001 to meet its obligation under which international agreement?

A) CBD

B) Nagoya Protocol

C) Cartagena Protocol

D) WTO–TRIPS Agreement

Answer: D – Explanation: TRIPS Art. 27.3(b) – 'sui generis' protection for plant varieties. India's law also added farmers' rights.

2. PPVFRA, which gives the Plant Genome Saviour awards, functions under which Union Ministry?

A) Environment

B) Science & Technology

C) Agriculture

D) Tribal Affairs

Answer: C – Explanation: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare; the Authority was set up in 2005. The NBA (Chennai) is under the Environment Ministry.

3. Where is India's National Genebank, described as the world's second largest, located?

A) ICAR-IARI

B) ICRISAT, Hyderabad

C) ICAR-NBPGR, New Delhi

D) NBA, Chennai

Answer: C – Explanation: NBPGR – National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources; it stores seeds long-term at −18°C. ICRISAT is an international institute.

4. The Pattiveeranpatti hill banana growers, 2010-11 Plant Genome Saviour Community awardees, are from which district?

A) Theni

B) Nilgiris

C) Salem

D) Dindigul

Answer: D – Explanation: Dindigul – famed for 'Virupakshi' hill banana of the Palani and Lower Palani hills. The community award now carries ₹10 lakh.

5. Under which body was the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture adopted?

A) FAO

B) UNEP

C) WIPO

D) UNESCO

Answer: A – Explanation: FAO – adopted in 2001, in force from 2004. India hosted its Governing Body session in New Delhi in 2022.

Sources: PIB – Ministry of Agriculture (PRID 2335454, 12 Nov 2026); Onmanorama (Malayala Manorama, 31 Oct 2026); PPVFRA – plantauthority.gov.in (PGS award notice 2025-26: ₹10 lakh / ₹1.5 lakh / ₹1 lakh); India Code (PPV&FR Act 2001); FAO (ITPGRFA). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.