

National flower, Blue Poppy is a new species



Meconopsis elongata



The national flower, Blue Poppy (*Meconopsis gakyidiana*)



Meconopsis merakensis

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It has been discovered that the national flower, the Blue Poppy is a new species to science with the discovery of two more new species of the *Mecanopsis*: *Mecanopsis elongata* and *Mecanopsis merakensis*.

Mecanopsis elongata is also endemic to Bhutan.

The national flower has been renamed as *Mecanopsis gakyidiana* from *Mecanopsis grandis* before. The blue poppy now has been upgraded to a species. Earlier, the national flower was misidentified as a subspecies to *Mecanopsis grandis*.

The *Mecanopsis gakyidiana* was named after the

country's guiding development philosophy Gross National Happiness. *Gakyid* stands for "Happiness" and *diana* is the nomenclature term for the flower.

National Biodiversity Centre (NBC) senior biodiversity officer, Choki Gyeltshen said that the common name for the national flower in both English and Dzongkha however remains unchanged. The name of *Mecanopsis gakyidiana* is still Blue Poppy in English and *Tshengenmeto* in Dzongkha.

NBC's curator of herbarium, Rinchen Yangzom said the scientific name has been changed because the national flower is not *Mecanopsis grandis*. It has been found that *Mecanopsis grandis* is not found in Bhutan.

"We don't have *grandis* anymore, they are found only in Nepal," she said.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests stated on its website that *Mecanopsis gakyidiana* was found to be different from the typical *Mecanopsis grandis* in several important characters such as plant life form, leaf arrangement, leaf colour, shape of the flower and colour of the petal. "Thereby warranting a separate identity of species rank," it is stated.

The researchers also found that the *Mecanopsis gakyidiana* is found only in Merak and Sakteng in Bhutan. "*Mecanopsis*, which are similar in colour and are found in Paro, Haa and Bumthang are not *Mecanopsis gakyidiana*, which people mis-

understand with the national flower," Rinchen Yangzom said.

Currently, the national flower is also recorded in western Arunachal Pradesh in India and Tibet.

Of the two new species of *Mecanopsis*, one bearing the scientific name, *Mecanopsis merakensis* is found in Merak and Sakteng. *Mecanopsis elongata* is found in Paro and Haa.

With the discovery of *Mecanopsis gakyidiana*, *Mecanopsis elongata* and *Mecanopsis*

merakensis, Bhutan now has 15 *Mecanopsis* species. Three of the *Mecanopsis* species, *Mecanopsis bhutanica*, *Mecanopsis superba* and *Mecanopsis elongata* are endemic to Bhutan.

In December last year, the *Mecanopsis* research works of photographer and amateur botanist from Chiba, Japan, T Yoshida, Rinchen Yangzom and DG Long from UK were published in "Sibbaldia", a journal of botanical gardens and horticulture based in the United Kingdom.



TOMORROW'S

Good day

- to perform *lhabsang* and *thruesel*

Bad day

- to consecrate
- to roof house