Wayanad (Keralam) to host Mountain Ecology Congress, 10–12 December

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News

What the organisers describe as India's first Mountain Ecology Congress, 'Processual Mountains – Mountain Ecology Congress 2026', will be held from 10 to 12 December at the Pookode campus of the Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) in Wayanad district, Keralam (UNI, 13 Nov 2026). It is organised by the Hume Centre for Ecology and Wildlife Biology with KVASU (congress website); a broad-based organising committee has been formed. About 500 delegates from Indian and overseas mountain regions are expected. Its themes are climate change, biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, culture, sustainable livelihoods and infrastructure-driven disaster risk. Its central idea is that mountains are not static landforms but processes, continually reshaped by geological, ecological and human forces. Academic sessions, exhibitions, cultural evenings, a children's programme and mountain and bird trails are planned. International Mountain Day (11 December) falls during the congress.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Event	Processual Mountains – Mountain Ecology Congress 2026 (India's first, per organisers)
Dates	10–12 December 2026

Point	Details
Venue	KVASU campus, Pookode, Wayanad, Keralam
Organisers	Hume Centre for Ecology and Wildlife Biology + KVASU
Delegates	About 500 (India and abroad)
Themes	Climate, biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, livelihoods, disaster risk
Related day	International Mountain Day – 11 Dec
Backdrop	30 July 2024 Wayanad landslides – Mundakkai, Chooralmala

Background

- Western Ghats: Running about 1,600 km from Gujarat to Kanniyakumari, the range became a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in 2012 and is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. Its highest peak is Anamudi (2,695 m) in Keralam. Wayanad is a plateau district of the range, with Chembra peak, the Banasura Sagar dam and the Edakkal caves.
- Gadgil and Kasturirangan reports: The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP, 2011), headed by Madhav Gadgil, treated the whole range as ecologically sensitive and proposed three zones. The High-Level Working Group under Dr K. Kasturirangan (2013), which reviewed it, recommended notifying only about 37% of the area as Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA). The Centre's draft notifications on this are yet to be finalised.
- Wayanad landslides: In the early hours of 30 July 2024, heavy rain triggered a series of landslides at Mundakkai, Chooralmala and Punchirimattom in Meppadi panchayat, Wayanad, killing more than 200 people. Unregulated construction on slopes and extreme rainfall were blamed – which is why the debate on mountain ecology matters.
- International Mountain Day: After declaring 2002 the International Year of Mountains, the UN General Assembly has observed 11 December as International Mountain Day since 2003; the FAO coordinates it. The Kabini river, rising in Wayanad, flows into Karnataka and joins the Kaveri.

Tamil Nadu link: Wayanad borders Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris district (Gudalur, Pandalur); both are part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The Kabini, rising in Wayanad, is a tributary of the Kaveri, whose waters reach Tamil Nadu via Mettur. Tamil Nadu's Western Ghats areas (Nilgiris, Anamalai, Kodaikanal) also fall within the scope of the Gadgil and Kasturirangan reports.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Event: Processual Mountains – Mountain Ecology Congress 2026 (India's first, per organisers); Dates: 10–12 December 2026; Venue: KVASU campus, Pookode, Wayanad, Keralam; Organisers: Hume Centre for Ecology and Wildlife Biology + KVASU.

What is the background to this news?

Western Ghats: Running about 1,600 km from Gujarat to Kanniyakumari, the range became a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in 2012 and is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Who headed the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) of 2011?

A) K. Kasturirangan

B) M.S. Swaminathan

C) Madhav Gadgil

D) Salim Ali

Answer: C – Explanation: Madhav Gadgil – treated the whole range as sensitive. The Kasturirangan group (2013) proposed about 37% of the area.

2. Along with Mundakkai, which other village was devastated in the July 2024 Wayanad landslides?

A) Munnar

B) Chooralmala

C) Kavalappara

D) Pettimudi

Answer: B – Explanation: Chooralmala (Meppadi panchayat). Kavalappara (Malappuram) and Pettimudi (Idukki) were Keralam's 2019 and 2020 landslides.

3. International Mountain Day, which falls during the congress, is observed on which date?

A) 11 December

B) 5 June

C) 22 April

D) 21 March

Answer: A – Explanation: 11 December – since 2003, coordinated by FAO. 5 June is Environment Day; 22 April Earth Day; 21 March Forests Day.

4. The Edakkal caves on Ambukuthi hill in Wayanad are famous for what?

A) Ajanta-style murals

B) Prehistoric carvings

C) Jain stone beds

D) Rock-cut temple

Answer: B – Explanation: Neolithic rock engravings (petroglyphs), found in the 1890s by Fred Fawcett, a Malabar police officer.

5. The Kabini, which rises in Wayanad and flows through Karnataka, is a tributary of which river?

A) Kaveri

B) Tungabhadra

C) Periyar

D) Bhavani

Answer: A – Explanation: The Kaveri – it joins near T. Narasipura, and the water reaches Tamil Nadu via Mettur. The Bhavani is another Kaveri tributary.

Sources: UNI (13 Nov 2026); Processual Mountains congress website; UN (International Mountain Day); UNESCO (Western Ghats); Kerala Tourism – keralatourism.org (Edakkal Caves) / The Hindu. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.