Funds crunch: Keralam's first tribal panchayat Edamalakkudy may shut

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News

Edamalakkudy, deep in the forest near Munnar in Keralam's Idukki district, is the State's first and only tribal grama panchayat, formed in November 2010 for the Muthuvan tribal community. With staff unpaid for six months, its main office at Societykudy has been shut and it now runs from a makeshift camp office at Devikulam, Onmanorama reported (20.11.2026). The panchayat has no own revenue and depends entirely on government grants; it needs at least ₹1.22 crore a year, but its General Purpose Fund has been cut to ₹87,700; Onmanorama says the State earlier provided ₹10–12 lakh a month. Reports say its 14 employees – 8 permanent and 6 on contract – and its 14 elected members have not received salaries or honoraria. On 21 November 2026, Leader of the Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan said Edamalakkudy faces closure and demanded immediate release of funds, accusing the government led by Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan of not intervening. Panchayat President M. Binu has announced an agitation in front of the Devikulam RDO office. In July 2026 the Keralam State Human Rights Commission had also ordered an inquiry into the crisis.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Panchayat	Edamalakkudy – Keralam's first and only tribal grama panchayat

Point	Details
District	Idukki (near Munnar)
Formed	November 2010
People	Muthuvan tribe; about 25–28 hamlets (figures vary by report)
Crisis	No salaries for 6 months; main office shut
Funds	Needs ₹1.22 crore/yr; General Purpose Fund ₹87,700
Present office	Camp office, Devikulam
Political reaction	LoP Pinarayi Vijayan (21.11.2026)
Earlier action	Keralam SHRC inquiry order (July 2026)

Background

- Constitution: the 73rd Amendment (1992) gave panchayats constitutional status by adding Part IX. Everyone on the village electoral roll is a member of the Gram Sabha. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) recommended three-tier Panchayati Raj, first launched at Nagaur, Rajasthan, in 1959.
- Finance: panchayats with little own tax revenue depend on grants recommended by State and Union Finance Commissions. Under Article 243-I the Governor constitutes a State Finance Commission every five years. Through the People's Plan Campaign launched in 1996, Keralam devolved 35–40% of its plan funds to local bodies. Onmanorama reported Edamalakkudy's annual building tax at about ₹6,000 and profession tax at about ₹1.10 lakh. A ₹30-lakh special corpus given at its formation has been used up.
- Geography: Edamalakkudy lies in the Anamalai region of the Western Ghats, in forests adjoining Eravikulam National Park. Anamudi (2,695 m), the highest peak in South India, is inside Eravikulam National Park. Reports say that for want of a road, patients must be carried about 8 km through forest; a ₹13.7-crore road sanctioned in 2023 has not begun.
- Community: the Muthuvans are a forest-dependent tribal community; by strictly barring outsiders during COVID-19, Edamalakkudy recorded its first case only in July 2021.

Tamil Nadu link: According to their tradition, the Muthuvans migrated to the hills from Madurai in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu's Scheduled Tribes list (Part XIV) also includes 'Mudugar, Muduvan' (entry 28) and 'Muthuvan' (entry 29) (TN Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department). The Anamalai range, where Edamalakkudy lies, spans the Tamil Nadu–Keralam border.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

Edamalakkudy, deep in the forest near Munnar in Keralam's Idukki district, is the State's first and only tribal grama panchayat, formed in November 2010 for the Muthuvan tribal community.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Panchayat: Edamalakkudy – Keralam's first and only tribal grama panchayat; District: Idukki (near Munnar); Formed: November 2010; People: Muthuvan tribe; about 25–28 hamlets (figures vary by report).

What is the background to this news?

Constitution: the 73rd Amendment (1992) gave panchayats constitutional status by adding Part IX. Everyone on the village electoral roll is a member of the Gram Sabha.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Anamudi, South India's highest peak near Edamalakkudy, lies within which protected area?

A) Silent Valley NP

B) Periyar Tiger Res.

C) Eravikulam NP

D) Mathikettan Shola NP

Answer: C – Explanation: Eravikulam National Park (Idukki) – Anamudi is 2,695 m. Silent Valley is in Palakkad; Periyar spans Idukki and Pathanamthitta.

2. Which 1996 Keralam campaign devolved about 35–40% of the State's plan funds to local bodies?

A) Haritha Keralam Mission

B) People's Plan Campaign

C) Akshaya Project

D) Total Literacy Drive

Answer: B – Explanation: People's Plan Campaign (Janakeeya Asoothranam) – inaugurated on 17 Aug 1996 by EMS Namboodiripad, with CM E.K. Nayanar present.

3. Panchayati Raj was first inaugurated in India on 2 October 1959 at Nagaur. In which State is Nagaur?

A) Andhra Pradesh

B) Gujarat

C) Maharashtra

D) Rajasthan

Answer: D – Explanation: Rajasthan – inaugurated by PM Nehru, following the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee's (1957) three-tier plan. Andhra Pradesh followed later that year.

4. Under the Constitution, who are the members of a village panchayat's Gram Sabha?

A) All on village voter roll

B) Ward members only

C) President & secretary

D) Tribal residents only

Answer: A – Explanation: Everyone registered on the electoral roll of the village (Article 243(b)). A State law decides the Gram Sabha's powers.

5. According to their tradition, the Muthuvans of Edamalakkudy migrated to the hills from which Tamil Nadu city?

A) Thanjavur

B) Tirunelveli

C) Madurai

D) Coimbatore

Answer: C – Explanation: Madurai. The names 'Muduvan' and 'Muthuvan' also appear in Tamil Nadu's Scheduled Tribes list.