Devasahayam Pillai

Why in News?

Recently, Devasahayam Pillai was declared **Saint by Pope Francis (Catholic Church) at The Vatican.**

- He had converted to Christianity in the 18th century in the then Kingdom of Travancore. Devasahayam had become the **first Indian layman to get sainthood for what The Vatican calls 'enduring increasing hardships'.**

Who was Devasahayam Pillai?

- Devasahayam was born on 23th April 23, 1712 in Nattalam village in Kanyakumari district.
- He was baptized in 1745, and **assumed the name 'Lazarus', meaning 'God is my help'.**
  - Baptism is a Christian sacrament marked by ritual use of water and admitting the recipient to the Christian community.
- His conversion **did not go well with the heads of his native religion**. False charges of treason and espionage were brought against him and he was divested of his post in the royal administration.
- He went on **to fight against Caste discrimination prevalent in the country** and was persecuted and then killed.
- On 14th January, 1752, Devasahayam was shot dead in the Aralvaimozhy forest. He is widely considered a martyr, and his mortal remains were interred inside what is now Saint Francis Xavier's Cathedral in Kottar, Nagercoil.
- The Vatican in **2012 recognised his martyrdom after a rigorous process.**

Why Devasahayam Pillai has been declared sainthood?

- Saint Devasahayam Pillai **stood for equality and fought against the evils of society** such as

Casteism and Communalism.
- His sainthood also comes at a time in India when the country is facing a surge in communalism.
- Devasahayam Pillai **being declared a saint is also a great opportunity for the Church to stand against the prevailing communal poison**.
  - **Communalism** is blind allegiance to one's own religious community in our culture. It is defined as a tool for or against mobilising people by appealing for communal services. Communalism is related to dogmatism and religious fundamentalism.

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