

## DEVASAHAYAM PILLAI TO BE GRANTED SAINTHOOD



### Issue

An ordinary layman known as Devasahayam Pillai will be granted sainthood by the Vatican next year.

### Background

Devasahayam was born as a Hindu near Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu. He got converted to Christianity and took the name 'Lazarus' in 1745.

### Details

- Devasahayam was approved for sainthood in February 2020 for facing hardships after he decided to embrace Christianity.
- He was prosecuted and imprisoned after he converted to Christianity. He was ultimately killed in 1752.

### Life history

- Devasahayam Pillai was born in Nattalam village in Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu. He served in the court of Marthanda Varma, the Maharaja of Travancore.
- Devasahayam was greatly influenced by a Dutch naval commander, who gave him teachings about the Catholic faith.
- He was baptized in the year 1745 and adopted a Christian name 'Lazarus'. He had to face opposition from Travancore state, which was against conversion.
- Vatican historians allege that he was wrongly accused of espionage and treason. He was removed unceremoniously from naval administration.

- Devasahayam was shot dead in the Aralvaimozhy forest in 1742. He is considered a martyr by Catholics and his body is preserved at Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral in the Diocese of Kottar.

### Reasons for sainthood

- Devasahayam was recommended for sainthood by Tamil Nadu Bishops' Council (TNBC) and the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI).
- He was declared blessed during the midday 'Angelus' prayer in the Vatican. He was considered to be a 'faithful layman'.

### Name controversy

- Several people have asked the Vatican to drop his last name 'Pillai' as it was a caste title. It was declined at that time.
- After clearing him for sainthood, Vatican decided to drop his last name and instead referred to him as 'Blessed Devasahayam'.

### NOTES

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