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Looking back at 100 years of the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu

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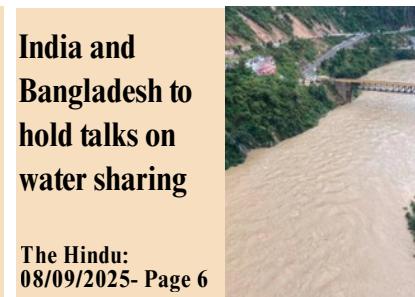
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India and Bangladesh to hold talks on water sharing

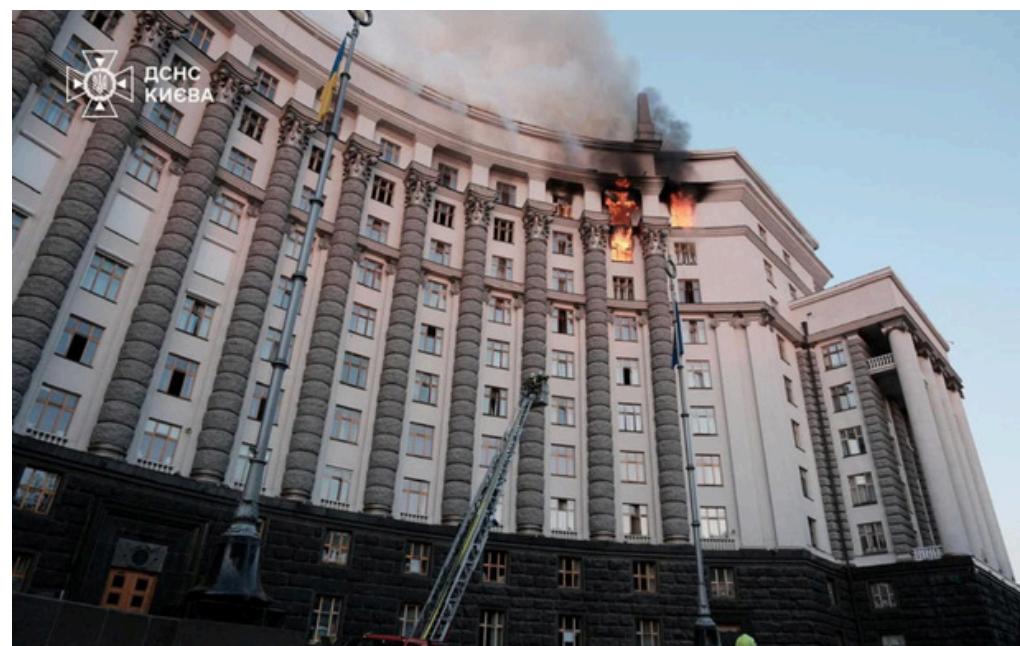
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Russia's largest air strike hits key Kyiv target



Russia hit Ukraine's capital with drones and missiles on Sunday in the largest aerial attack since the war began, killing four persons across the country and damaging a key government building. Plumes of smoke rose from the roof of Kyiv's government headquarters. The building is the home of Ukraine's Cabinet and its Ministers. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that he was counting on a strong U.S. response.

Russia attacked with 810 drones and decoys, Ukraine's Air Force said, adding it shot down 747 drones and four missiles. Sunday's attack is the second mass Russian drone and missile attack to target Kyiv in the span of two weeks, as hopes for peace talks wane. The Russian Defence Ministry said Sunday that it used "high-precision weapons" and drones to strike drone assembly and storage sites, military air bases in central, southern, and eastern Ukraine, an industrial facility, and a logistics facility on the outskirts of Kyiv. It comes after European leaders pressed Mr. Putin to work to end the war after 26 of Ukraine's allies pledged to deploy troops as a "reassurance force" for the war-torn country once the fighting ends. Mr. Zelenskyy said he spoke on the phone with French President Emmanuel Macron about the attack. "Together with France, we are preparing new measures to strengthen our defence," Mr. Zelenskyy said.



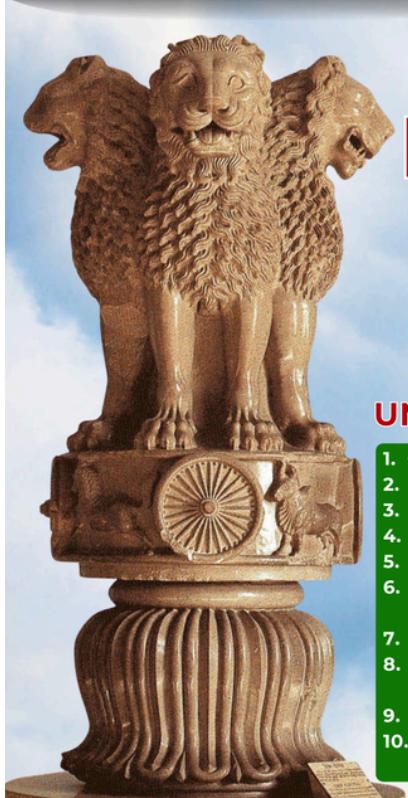
Risking the lives of 20,000 Sami reindeer herders [»page 6](#)



Sri Lankan Tamil refugees not eligible for long-term visas [»page 6](#)



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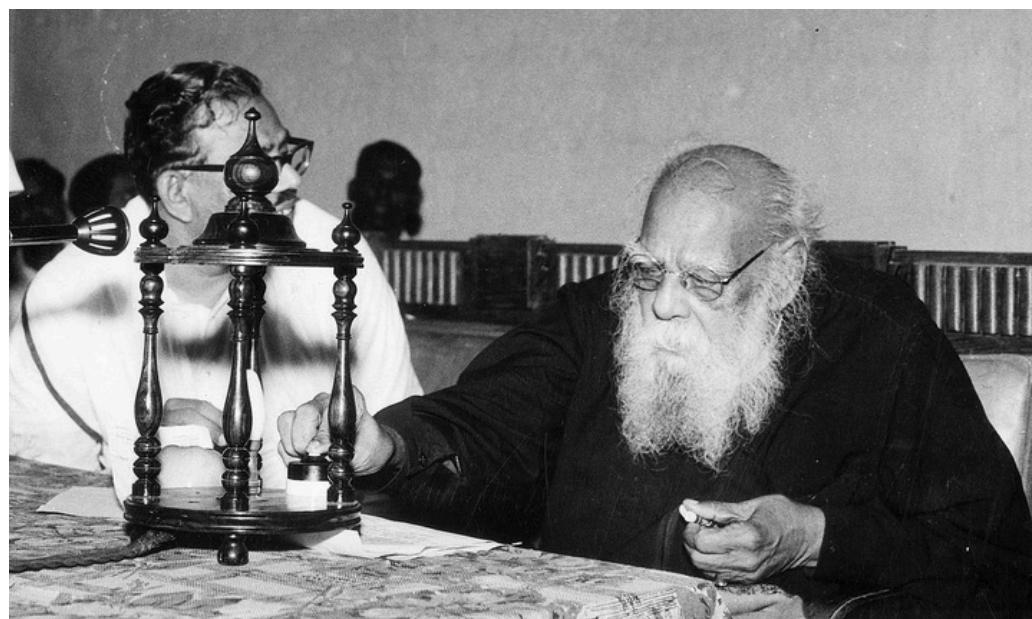
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Looking back at 100 years of the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu

Centenary of the Self-Respect Movement (1925–2025):

- The movement changed Tamil Nadu's political discourse, emerging as an ideological impulse mobilising men and women across castes and classes.

Origins:

- No single founding moment, but rooted in rebellion, defiance, and the questioning of social hierarchies.
- Inspired by thinkers like Iyothee Thass and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy.
- Launch of Kudi Arasu (Republic) weekly by Periyar formalised the movement.

Periyar's Leadership:

- Broke from Congress in 1925, criticising its lack of radical social reform.
- Advocated "radical and militant non-Brahminism."
- Warned against formation of a new non-Brahmin elite replicating caste oppression.

Radical Reform Agenda:

- Movement emphasised dismantling caste, gender, and social inequalities.
- Advocated widow remarriage, right to divorce, birth control, women's education, and equal rights.
- Popularised self-respect marriages (without Brahmin priests).

Justice Party's Role:

- Founded in 1916, aimed at ending Brahmin supremacy in politics and administration.
- Criticised for focusing only on educated and rich non-Brahmins.
- Periyar transformed its ideology into a mass movement for non-Brahmin rights.

Kudi Arasu's Impact:

- Extension of the Self-Respect Movement, radical strand of the Dravidian movement.
- Provided an alternative journalistic space against Brahmin-dominated press.

Historical Significance:

- Movement gave non-Brahmins a sense of pride, dignity, and social awareness.
- Radically challenged caste-based Hindu social order and Congress's nationalism.
- Laid foundation for broader Dravidian movement and Tamil Nadu's later political landscape.

Punjab floods leave farmers stranded between two seasons

Impact of floods:

- Floodwaters have marooned villages in Punjab, particularly in Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Mansa, Ferozepur, Fazilka and other districts.
- Around 30% of paddy crop destroyed; 1.72 lakh hectares of crops damaged in 18 out of 23 districts.
- Almost 2,000 villages affected, 4 lakh people impacted, and 46 deaths reported till September 6.

Farmers' plight:

- Paddy crops submerged under water for days, making recovery impossible.
- Floodwater from rivers like Ravi has deposited muck and debris, reducing soil fertility.
- Land now unsuitable for sowing winter wheat, leading to concerns for the next season as well.

Economic losses:

- Thousands of acres destroyed; farmers also lost livestock.
- Farmer outfits demand ₹70,000 per acre compensation for damaged paddy crops and a loan waiver.
- Months to rebuild:
- Late sowing of wheat expected, but will result in low yield and prolonged losses.

Political & social response:

- Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) has urged the Centre to declare the floods a "national disaster" across Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Haryana.
- Farmer bodies demand immediate financial aid and compensation to prevent worsening of crisis.

Long-Term Implications

- The floods highlight climate change vulnerabilities in Punjab, where erratic monsoons and extreme rainfall events are becoming more common.
- They expose overdependence on paddy, a water-intensive crop, which worsens flood impacts.
- The crisis may push policymakers to encourage crop diversification (e.g., maize, pulses, oilseeds) to reduce environmental and economic risks.
- Repeated natural disasters may deepen agrarian distress, adding to farmers' protests and political tensions in the region.





Reform of GST will boost consumption: Sitharaman

Revenue Buoyancy:

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman expressed confidence that increased consumption will help bridge the ₹48,000 crore shortfall in GST revenues.
- The shortfall arose from rationalisation of tax rates.

Impact on Growth & Fiscal Deficit:

- Sitharaman said GST reforms will boost consumption, supporting GDP growth.
- She dismissed concerns about the fiscal deficit, reaffirming the target of 4.4% of GDP in 2025-26 (₹15.69 lakh crore).
- The ₹48,000 crore figure was based on static assumptions; with higher consumption, the shortfall is expected to be offset.

Economic Outlook:

- Better-than-expected GDP growth in the first quarter (6.3–6.8%) gives confidence in fiscal stability.
- Consumption boost from the GST reform (effective September 22) is expected to raise income buoyancy.

GST Reform Details:

- The GST Council approved a two-tier structure: 5% & 18%, and a new 40% slab.
- Sitharaman described the GST overhaul as a “people’s reform”, affecting all 140 crore citizens.
- Emphasised inclusivity: “No individual is untouched by GST — even the poorest benefit when they buy something small.”
- Reform ensures fairness and affordability across sections of society.
- Ease of Doing Business: Simplified GST structure reduces compliance burden.
- Rationalisation designed to reduce tax burden on common goods, putting more money in consumers’ hands.

India and Bangladesh to hold talks on water sharing

- The India-Bangladesh Joint River Commission will meet in Delhi to discuss water sharing and ongoing tensions between the two countries.
- Bangladesh will send a 10-member team to highlight concerns about sharing the waters of 14 cross-border rivers.
- The talks are seen as a prelude to negotiations on the Ganga Waters Agreement of 1996, which is set for renewal next year.
- The renewal is significant as it coincides with Bangladesh's first election following the overthrow of the Sheikh Hasina government in August 2024.
- The original treaty was signed during Sheikh Hasina's first term in 1996, with a provision for renewal after 30 years; Bangladesh now seeks a longer renewal term and changes in the use of river water.
- Bangladesh is requesting a special vehicle for technical visits to study water flows of specific rivers: Muhuri, Khowai, Gomti, Dharla, and Boukhamar.
- Bangladesh also proposes setting up a joint flood forecasting mechanism.
- India and Bangladesh share 54 transboundary rivers.
- Water sharing is crucial for irrigation, drinking water, fisheries, navigation, and hydropower.

Issues & Challenges

1. Seasonal Variability:

- Rivers carry excess water in monsoon (floods) but very little in dry season (scarcity).

2. Climate Change:

- Glacial melt, erratic rainfall, and upstream projects threaten water security.

3. Domestic Politics:

- Indian states (West Bengal, Assam, Tripura) and Bangladeshi stakeholders often clash over distribution.

4. Dependence on China:

- As Brahmaputra originates in Tibet, Chinese upstream projects also worry both nations.



PRELIMS CORNER :

1. The “Right to decent burial” is protected under which article of the Constitution of India?

- (a) Article 19
- (b) Article 29
- (c) Article 21
- (d) Article 14

2. With reference to the Indian Constitution, the concept of ‘principled distance’ is related to

- (a) Federalism
- (b) Socialism
- (c) Secularism
- (d) Separation of Powers

3. The capital of Indonesia has been shifted from Jakarta to East Kalimantan. The name of the New Capital is?

- (a) Bandung
- (b) Surabaya
- (c) Nusantara
- (d) Medan

4. “Darvaza gas crater” recently seen in news located in which of the following countries?

- (a) Pakistan
- (b) Afghanistan
- (c) Turkey
- (d) Turkmenistan

Nilgiris tea and the brewing of a crisis

- The Nilgiri teas are known for their fragrance, flavour, and export value.
- The Nilgiris tea industry is facing a crisis due to the collapse of green tea leaves prices, which is most harmful for small growers.
- The situation worsened after the collapse of the USSR and the devaluation of the rupee in the 1990s, leading to over-supply and falling auction rates for Nilgiris tea.
- Nilgiris tea factories pay much less than auction rates for raw tea leaves, squeezing small growers who face high production costs and weak market access.
- Coonoor auction prices declined overall since 1990, with Nilgiris tea fetching lower prices than tea from Assam or West Bengal, yet the price gap between regions persists.
- Most buyers and factory owners have not tried to brand and market Nilgiris tea, leading to lost opportunities in untapped domestic and export markets.
- The reluctance and lack of marketing skills among second- and third-generation growers is causing them to leave the tea industry for sectors like IT, worsening the labor crunch.
- The government-run INDCOSERVE and TANTEA cooperatives offer some protection, but low prices and poor support put small growers at risk.
- There is urgent need for a floor price and revamped auction system, as well as investment in value addition and marketing to revive Nilgiris tea and support small producers.

Global Competition

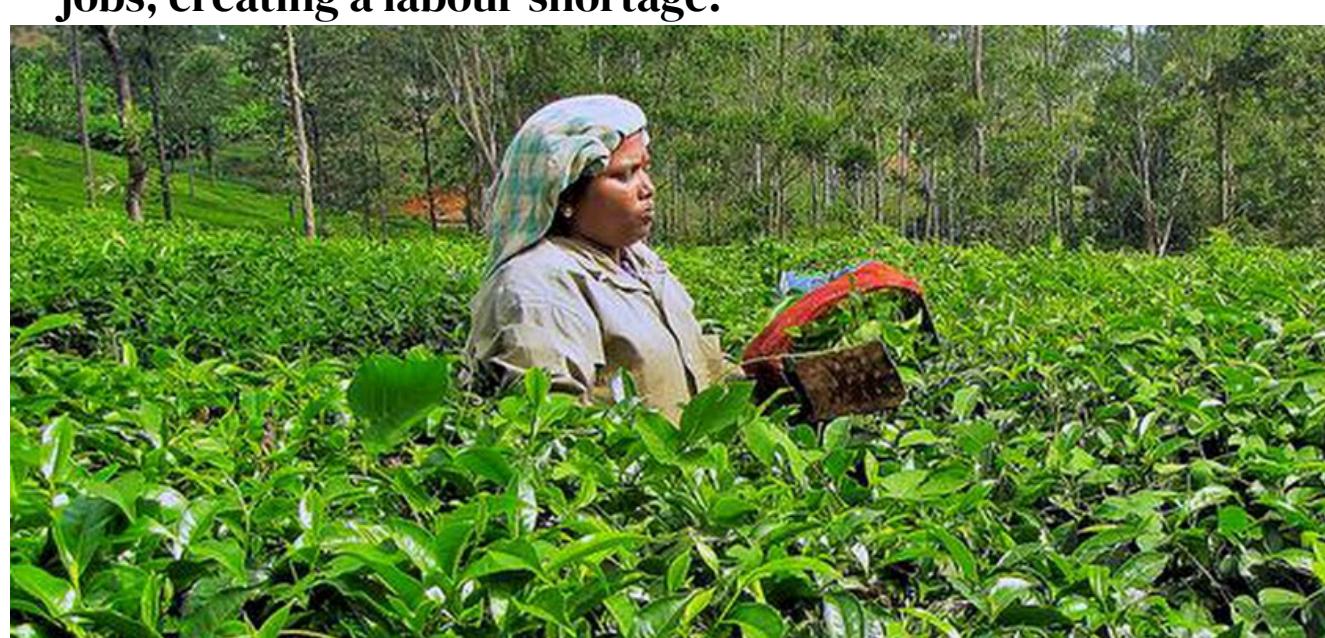
- Export demand for Nilgiri tea has fallen due to competition from Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam, which offer cheaper tea.
- Shift in consumer preference to coffee and herbal teas also hurts demand.

Climate Change

- Erratic rainfall, prolonged dry spells, and pest infestations (like tea mosquito bug) are reducing yields.
- Quality is also being affected by rising temperatures.

Labour Issues

- Plantation workers face low wages, poor housing, lack of social security.
- Younger generations are leaving plantations for better-paying jobs, creating a labour shortage.



India-China: the inability to define a border



India-China Border Issue:

- India has a complicated border history with China, primarily around Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim.
- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) remains undefined and disputed.
- The 1993 BPTA and later agreements reduced tensions but didn't clarify the border.

Efforts for Resolution:

- Since the 1980s, both countries acknowledged the need for a peaceful settlement.
- The Joint Working Group (JWG) was set up in 1988 during Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China.
- The 1993 Border Peace and Tranquillity Agreement (BPTA) was the first confidence-building measure, focusing on peace along the LAC.

Challenges:

- Both sides could not agree on how to define or clarify the LAC, despite repeated efforts.
- China resisted India's push for clarification, viewing it as freezing the LAC in India's favour.
- The agreements managed to reduce tensions temporarily but did not resolve the core issue of boundary settlement.

Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs):

- Agreements in the 1990s and 2000s (including military disengagement protocols) helped avoid large-scale conflicts.
- However, military standoffs like the one in Ladakh (2020) highlighted the fragility of these measures.

Present Scenario:

- The LAC remains undefined and fluid, leading to repeated border tensions.
- Trust deficit and differing perceptions of territory continue to block permanent settlement.
- Both sides agree peace is essential, but mutual suspicion and strategic concerns prevent resolution.
- Settlement requires political will, compromise, and updating CBMs.
- Without resolution, the border will remain unstable.

Way Forward for Stronger Ties

- Finalizing LAC clarification to reduce tensions.
- Expanding balanced trade and reducing dependency.
- Strengthening multilateral cooperation (BRICS, SCO, G20).
- Enhancing people-to-people exchanges for cultural trust.
- Maintaining regular military dialogue to avoid flare-ups.

India and China have a long, complex relationship shaped by historical disputes, economic ties, and geopolitical rivalry. Despite tensions, both countries have repeatedly tried to improve ties through dialogue, agreements, and cooperation mechanisms.



Sri Lankan Tamil refugees not eligible for long-term visas, says official

- Undocumented Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India are not eligible for long-term visas (LTVs), as clarified by a Union Home Ministry official.
- The order exempts them from penal provisions but does not allow LTVs or facilitate citizenship.
- LTVs are a precursor to Indian citizenship and are normally issued for 1–5 years.
- The 1955 Citizenship Act allows foreigners (including Sri Lankans) to apply for Indian citizenship through registration/naturalisation if they meet eligibility.
- However, a 1986 Ministry directive asked states not to entertain Sri Lankan refugees' citizenship applications.
- The Indian government concluded that Sri Lankan refugees arriving after July 1983 should not be naturalised under the Citizenship Act, 1955, and Citizenship Rules, 1956.
- On September 2, 2025, MHA notified the Immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) Order, exempting registered Sri Lankan Tamils (who entered before January 9, 2015) from penal provisions of the 2025 Immigration and Foreigners Act.
- Six minority communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are exempted and can apply for LTVs, unlike Sri Lankan Tamils.
- Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, even with 11+ years of stay, will not be eligible for LTVs.
- MHA clarified that Sri Lankan Tamils could stay without fear of deportation/expulsion but would remain "illegal migrants."
- As per the MHA's 2023–24 report, 3,04,269 Sri Lankan refugees entered India in phases between July 1983 and August 2012.

Sweden's rare-earth mining plans risk the lives of 20,000 Sami reindeer herders

- Sweden's mining expansion in Luossavaara Mountain, northern Sweden threatens the traditional livelihood of Sami reindeer herders.
- The Per Geijer rare-earth deposit, hailed as Europe's largest, could cut off migration routes used by the Sami village of Gabna.
- Sami reindeer herding is deeply tied to their culture, food, language, and knowledge; losing it would risk their cultural survival.
- In Gabna, about 2,500–3,000 reindeer and 15–20 herders depend on these routes; ~150 people are affected.
- Even before the Per Geijer discovery, herders struggled with the expanding Kirunavaara iron-ore mine, the world's largest underground iron-ore mine.
- Mining company LKAB argues the mine could reduce Europe's reliance on China for rare-earth minerals, aiming to begin production by the 2030s.
- Herders say climate change is already straining reindeer husbandry, with less snow, freezing rain, and ice layers preventing reindeer from reaching food.
- Suggestions like transporting reindeer by trucks are seen as unfeasible, since it disrupts natural grazing and migration, further harming survival.
- Sami leaders fear that mining plus climate change together will erase their traditional way of life and cultural continuity.



Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans **c**

There is no specific legislative framework in India that protects the rights of people who have died. However, several judicial pronouncements of the SC and the High Courts (HC) have recognized the rights of the deceased and have included them within the purview of Article 21 of the constitution. The right to life with the dignity of a living person has also been extended to a person who is dead. The Madras High Court in *Anandhi Simon vs The State of Tamil Nadu* held that Right to decent Burial is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the constitution

Q2. Ans **c**

The concept of Principled Distance is related to Secularism as given by Rajeev Bhargava, an Indian Political theorist who defines Principled Distance which entails the state maintaining equal distance from all religions and maintaining peaceful coexistence of all religions. Indian secularism follows the concept of principled distance which also allows for Non-interference and maintains the balanced distance between the State and the religion.

Q3. Ans **c**

Earlier, Jakarta was the capital of Indonesia, but now it is facing environmental problems especially pollution, and financial issues. Indonesia passed a bill replacing its capital Jakarta with East Kalimantan, situated to the east of Borneo Island. The new capital city of the country is called Nusantara.

Q4. Ans **d**

The Darvaza Gas Crater is a burning natural gas field, which is found in the Karakum Desert of north-central, Turkmenistan. The Darvaza gas crater is also known as the 'Gateway to Hell'.

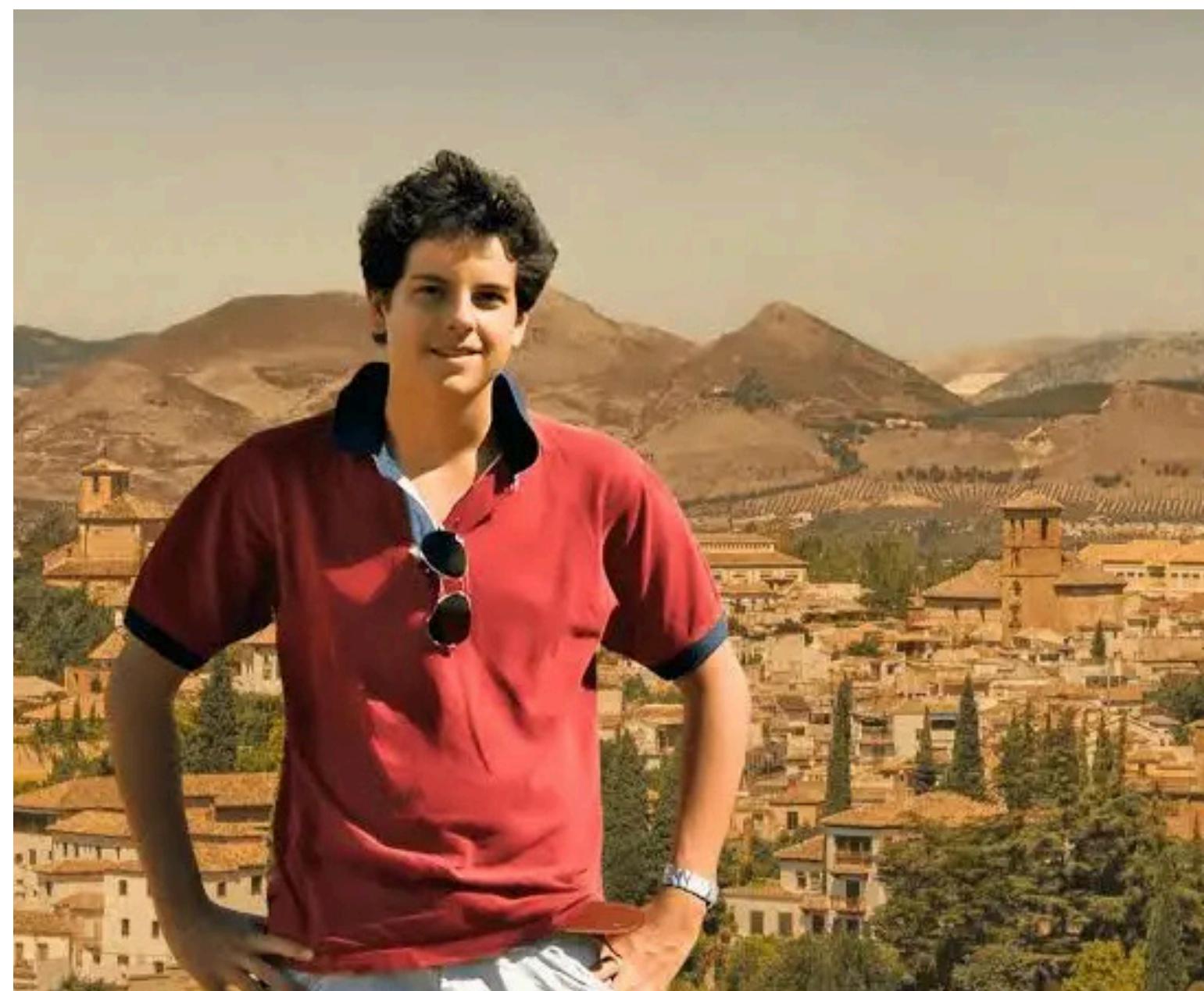


Case Study:

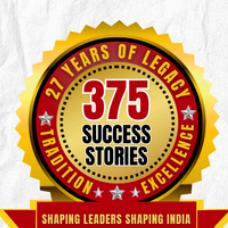


Indian generics as global public good - India matters in the supply of affordable essential medicines to the world. India is known as the "pharmacy of the world" for good reason. The country supplies about 20% of all generic drugs - cheaper versions of brand-name medicines, widely prescribed around the world. One estimate suggests that country's pharma export market will increase at least tenfold by 2047, bringing its value to \$350bn. In the US, for instance, where nine out of ten prescriptions dispensed are for generics, India provides around 40% of those generic drugs. In the UK, it supplies around 33% of generics, which account for four out of five NHS prescriptions. India is also a key source of pharma products for sub-Saharan Africa, where people often depend more heavily on affordable medicines. Since 2023, India's government has been rolling out stricter quality regulations for pharmaceutical manufacturers, requiring them to upgrade their facilities to meet higher standards.

Teen whose tech wizardry turned him 'God's influencer' is the first millennial saint- Saint Carlo Acutis



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