

THE PALA CIVIL TIMES



Civil Service Institute | Pala | Thiruvananthapuram | South India's Premier Civil Service Coaching Institute | www.civilservicepala.com

PM Modi to review Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal



The Hindu: 19/09/2025- Page 2

India studying defence pact between Saudi, Pak.: MEA



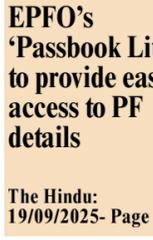
The Hindu: 19/09/2025- Page 4

SEBI gives clean chit to Adani Group in Hindenburg case



The Hindu: 19/09/2025- Page 12

EPFO's 'Passbook Lite' to provide easy access to PF details



The Hindu: 19/09/2025- Page 6

U.S. to revoke waiver on Chabahar port sanctions



The Hindu: 19/09/2025- Page 6

Saudi-Pak. sign a defence pact that defines 'attack on one as attack on both'

Saudi Arabia and nuclear armed Pakistan have signed a mutual defence pact that defines any attack on either nation as an attack on both — a key accord in the wake of Israel's strike on Qatar last week. The kingdom has long had close economic, religious and security ties to Pakistan, including reportedly providing funding for Islamabad's nuclear weapons programme as it developed.



But the timing of the pact appeared to be a signal to Israel, West Asia's only nuclear-armed state, which has conducted a sprawling military offensive since Palestinian nationalist Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel stretching across Iran, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Qatar, Syria and Yemen. The pact marks the first major defence decision by a Gulf Arab country since the Qatar attack. Analysts have suggested over the years that Saudi Arabia could be included under Islamabad's nuclear umbrella, particularly as tensions have risen over Iran's atomic programme. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have a defence relationship stretching back decades, in part due to Islamabad's willingness to defend the Islamic holy sites of Mecca and Medina in the kingdom.



The Varkala Cliff on the Kerala coast stands as a unique and visually striking geological formation, where Mio-Pliocene sedimentary rocks of the Warkalli Formation are dramatically exposed along a 6.14 km coastal escarpment, revealing a rich sequence of red and white sandstones, lignite seams, palynofossils, jarosite minerals, and lateritic caps that document India's Neogene geohistory and the last phases of the Gondwana breakup. Varkala is set for global renown, with its unique natural heritage site making it to the Tentative List of Unesco's World Heritage Sites.



Madras HC calls for framing of guidelines to penalise parties »page 2



Army scales up induction of drones »page 4



STATE



PM Modi to review Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a visit to Gujarat on September 20, where he will review the progress of the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal in Ahmedabad district. He will also inspect the works completed so far and hold a detailed review meeting with officials regarding the ongoing projects at the site.

- Lothal, once a prominent trading hub of the Indus Valley Civilisation, is a symbol of India's maritime strength and prosperity.
- The complex is located near Lothal in Gujarat, a prominent city of the Harappan civilization and home to the world's earliest known dock, dating back to 2,200 BC.
- Lothal played a crucial role in ancient maritime trade and had connections with regions like Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Persian Gulf, and Oman.
- NMHC will include a museum with 14 galleries, an open aquatic gallery, Lighthouse Museum, Bagicha Complex, and a recreation of Lothal town.
- The site will have educational institutes, amusement parks, resorts, and will also recreate cities like Dholavira and Lothal from the Indus Valley period.
- The complex will feature immersive exhibits on ancient navigation, shipbuilding, trading ships, and the evolution of Indian naval power
- The project is being built under the Sagar Mala scheme by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India; Phase 1A is being constructed by Tata Projects.

Madras HC calls for framing of guidelines to penalise parties for damage caused to property

Madras High Court's Directive

- The Madras High Court has asked the State government to frame guidelines for collecting security deposits from political parties for public meetings and events, to compensate for any damage caused to public/private property by the party's cadre.

Purpose of Guidelines

- The aim is to ensure that victims/sufferers of property damage during large gatherings and political events are compensated, as they rarely receive compensation currently.
- The Tamil Nadu Property (Prevention of Damage and Loss) Act was intended to prevent damage to public property, later amended to include private property in 1994.

Report Requested

- Justice N. Sathish Kumar has asked for a report by September 24 regarding the guidelines, which should cover all political parties and groups arranging demonstrations or large gatherings.
- Indemnification and Security Deposit
- The Act and its amendment focus on making parties compensate for property loss.
- The court stated strict conditions are needed, such as requiring security deposits from organizers to indemnify potential property loss, since compensation rules have not been properly implemented.

Observations and Case Context

- The directive arose from interim orders passed on a writ filed by actor C. Joseph Vijay's party, complaining about stringent police conditions regarding events, particularly those affecting his campaign.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1. Which of the following pairs is not correctly matched ?

- (a) Blue origin - Spaceflight company
- (b) Tiangong-1 - Space station
- (c) Falcon - Submarine cable system
- (d) Tokamak reactor - Nuclear fission

2. The Treaty of Tumlong is related to which of the below states ?

- (a) Sikkim
- (b) Tripura
- (c) Assam
- (d) Meghalaya

3. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is associated with :

- (a) Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
- (b) Asian Development Bank
- (c) BRICS
- (d) Financial Action Task Force

4. Catalytic converter is used for :

- (a) Conversion of biomass into ethanol
- (b) Conversion of sewage sludge into biogas
- (c) Conversion of methane hydrates into natural gas
- (d) Conversion of toxic gases emitted from an engine into steam

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

Kerala seeks 'extra borrowing limit' amid GST losses, tariffs

Kerala's Request

- Kerala has asked the 16th Finance Commission for supplementary grants and eligibility for a "temporary extra borrowing limit" of 0.5% of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) to help absorb losses from GST slab changes and U.S. reciprocal tariffs.

Reasons for the Request

- Kerala seeks support under Article 275 of the Constitution, urging the commission to reassess state finances and resources for the next five years due to a widening gap between state revenue and devolved funds after the GST rate revision.

Fiscal Imbalance Concerns

- The reduction of GST rates is expected to worsen Kerala's vertical fiscal imbalance during the upcoming five-year period from 2026-27, mainly because compensation from cess on items in the 28% tax rate has stopped.

Proposed Use of Borrowing

- Kerala plans to use the extra borrowing limit specifically for export-related infrastructure, including ports, cold chains, and developing new export markets to mitigate the effects of U.S. tariffs.

Estimated Revenue Loss

- The state estimates its revenue loss from the U.S. reciprocal tariff alone to be ₹2,400 crore during 2025-26, highlighting the need for support.

Constitutional Provision

- Article 293 of the Indian Constitution empowers state governments to borrow within India upon the security of their Consolidated Fund, but this power is subject to limitations imposed by Parliament and the Centre.
- If a state owes money to the Central Government, any further borrowing requires Centre's consent and may have additional conditions attached.

Borrowing Limits and Flexibility

- Normally, states may borrow up to 3% of their GSDP annually, as recommended by Finance Commissions and regulated by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act.
- States may be granted extra borrowing limits (such as an additional 0.25–0.5% of GSDP) based on performance in fiscal reforms, power sector improvements, or response to crises (e.g., pandemic, GST compensation shortfalls).

Army scales up induction of drones, aims to make every soldier a drone operator

Army's Drone Induction Drive

- The Indian Army is rapidly increasing the use of drones and counter-drone systems, with operational units and dedicated drone centres already set up at key training institutions.

Aim and Training

- The objective is to make drone operations a standard soldier capability, including at institutions like the Indian Military Academy (Dehradun), Infantry School (Mhow), and the Officers Training Academy (Chennai).
- The "Eagle in the Arm" concept aims for every soldier to be capable of operating a drone just like a weapon, with drones deployed for combat, surveillance, logistics, and evacuation missions depending on operational needs.

Layered Protection and Capabilities

- Artillery regiments will receive counter-drone systems, loiter munitions, and advanced batteries to boost accuracy and survivability.
- Infantry battalions will have dedicated drone platoons, increasing firepower and battlefield awareness.

Leadership Vision

- The Army Chief envisions drone operations as an essential skill for soldiers, viewing this technological integration as key for modern warfare and operational effectiveness.
- There is a dual thrust: arming soldiers with drones and strengthening counter-drone measures for layered battlefield protection.



India studying defence pact between Saudi, Pak.; vows to guard its interests



Defence Pact Between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan

- Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed a mutual defence agreement stating any aggression against either country will be viewed as aggression against both.
- The pact formalizes a long-standing arrangement for their "comprehensive national security" cooperation.

India's Response

- India is aware of the development and is studying its implications for national and regional security.
- The Ministry of External Affairs stressed commitment to protecting India's national interests and maintaining security in all domains.

Background and Implications

- The joint statement by Saudi and Pakistani leaders highlights nearly eight decades of close bilateral ties, reflecting mutual efforts to strengthen security and strategic cooperation.
- India indicated that any escalation resulting from the pact will be closely monitored and that India will guard its interests against any developments.

Saudi Arabia's Relationship with Pakistan and India

- Saudi Arabia is a major energy supplier to India and employs many Indian workers, but its military relations with Pakistan have strengthened in recent years.
- In 2022, Saudi Arabia awarded Pakistan's Army Chief a prestigious honor, reflecting deepening military cooperation.
- Historically, Saudi support to Pakistan has included direct aid, military assistance, and diplomatic support.

Additional Details

- The recent pact comes after high-level visits and consultations, including meetings between Pakistani and Saudi leaders and regional security summits.
- Saudi Arabia and Pakistan's strengthened relationship is aimed at "deterrence against any aggression" and closer collaboration on regional and global security.



NCST forms panel to look into duties given in 2005

Background

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was assigned eight additional duties in 2005 to protect ST communities' rights, focusing on issues like shifting cultivation, displaced tribals, forest conservation, and ownership of resources.

New Panel Formation

- More than 20 years later, the NCST has, for the first time, formed a special committee with three sub-committees to review how these duties have been performed.
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs' notification in 2005 tasked the NCST with areas such as livelihood strategies, efficacy of rehabilitation, role of tribals in forest protection, and eliminating shifting cultivation.

Sub-committee Focus Areas

- One sub-committee will look at livelihood strategies, ownership rights, and minor forest produce, minerals, and water resources.
- Another will examine land alienation and the efficacy of rehabilitation for tribals displaced by development projects.
- The last will assess the role of tribal communities in forest conservation, progress on PESA (Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act), and elimination of shifting cultivation.

Report and Challenges

- The NCST cites previous lack of staff and funding as reasons for slow progress, describing itself as "severely handicapped" in addressing the additional duties.
- The new committee is tasked with preparing detailed reports about how these additional functions can be effectively carried out, including recommendations and steps for improvement.

U.S. to revoke waiver on Chabahar port sanctions

U.S. Revokes Chabahar Port Sanctions Waiver

- The U.S. announced it will revoke its waiver of sanctions for India's development of the Chabahar port in Iran, ending a special waiver given in 2018 under the Trump administration.
- The move is part of a broader policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran, with new sanctions impacting India's investment in Chabahar and its use as an alternative trading route to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Impact on India

- India has invested about ₹200 crore (out of ₹400 crore allocated since 2016) on the Chabahar project, which saw a 43% rise in vessel traffic and a 34% increase in container traffic in 2023-24.
- The sanctions could hamper India's plans for regional connectivity, increased trade, and strategic access to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan.

U.S. Policy Details

- The waiver was granted under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act for Afghanistan-related activities; its revocation comes into effect September 29, 2025.
- Persons or entities engaging with Chabahar risk exposure to U.S. sanctions unless specifically protected.

Broader Context

- The measure is the fourth round of Iran-related sanctions under the Trump administration, following earlier steps affecting oil imports from Iran and Venezuela, and other trade.
- India has responded to past U.S. actions with its own "reciprocal tariff" and continues diplomatic engagement with Iran on the Chabahar port's future.
- The decision comes shortly after India and the U.S. signalled a rapprochement on trade issues, highlighting ongoing tensions amid cooperation.



EXPLAINED

Why did India condemn Doha strike?

The story so far

- India condemned Israel's bombing in Doha (Sept 9) as a "violation of sovereignty"—a stronger stance than past responses.
- This marks a shift from India's usual positions on Israeli operations, raising questions about its West Asia policy.
- Experts say India's reaction has more to do with close ties to Qatar and Gulf states than a broad principle of sovereignty.

Why did India criticise the Doha strike?

- Israel bombed a home in Doha where Hamas leaders were meeting, killing five.
- India stated it was deeply concerned about the impact on regional security.
- Indian Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council stressed respect for sovereignty and adherence to international law.
- PM Modi spoke to Qatari Emir expressing solidarity with the Qatari people.

How does this differ from India's past reactions?

- India usually avoids condemning Israel directly—for example, staying silent on:
 - Israeli strikes in Lebanon
 - Hezbollah killings in Beirut
 - Attacks in Gaza
- This time, India clearly condemned the violation of Qatar's sovereignty, showing a stronger stance.

Why is Qatar treated differently?

- Qatar plays a special role for India:
 - Major supplier of natural gas.
 - Important for Indian expatriates.
 - Key Gulf diplomatic partner.
- Israel's attack on Doha put U.S. bases in Qatar at risk, raising geopolitical concerns.
- India wanted to reassure Gulf countries of its balanced approach.

India's silence on Gaza

- Despite thousands killed in Gaza, including children, India has largely stayed silent.
- India abstained on a UNGA resolution demanding ceasefire, calling attacks on civilians "deeply regrettable."
- This shows a careful balancing act:
 - Condemn when sovereignty of Gulf allies (like Qatar) is violated.
 - Stay neutral on Israel-Palestine conflict to preserve ties with both.

The bigger picture for India's West Asia policy

- India's stance is guided by:
 - Strategic interests – energy security, expatriate population, trade.
 - Regional balance – strong ties with both Israel and Gulf states.
 - Global positioning – projecting itself as a principled yet pragmatic power.
- Recent moves (Saudi-Iran rapprochement, Gulf defence mechanisms) make India's careful balancing more important than ever.



BUSINESS

EPFO's 'Passbook Lite' to provide easy access to PF details

EPFO has launched 'Passbook Lite' to make PF details more easily accessible, cut down login hassles, and bring transparency in PF transfers with online Annexure K access.

New Facility Launched:

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) launched 'Passbook Lite' within its members' portal.
- Provides a summarised view of:
 - Contributions
 - Withdrawals
 - Current balance

Current Issues Addressed:

- Members earlier needed to log in separately to the passbook portal.
- Problems included:
 - Dual login system
 - Password delays
 - Synchronisation issues

Benefits of the Reform:

- Reduces load on the existing portal.
- Improves operational efficiency.
- Provides detailed and comprehensive view of PF accounts.

Annexure K Online Access:

- Annexure K (transfer certificate) will now be available in PDF format directly from the portal.
- Ensures full transparency in PF transfers.
- Members can track status of PF transfer applications online.

Minister's Statement:

- Mansukh Mandaviya said this move will:
 - Reduce grievances.
 - Enhance transparency.
 - Provide a member-satisfactory experience.



SEBI gives clean chit to Adani Group in Hindenburg case

SEBI has exonerated the Adani Group in the Hindenburg case, ruling out fraud, manipulation, or diversion of funds. The group's transactions were cleared as lawful, reinforcing Adani's stance that the allegations were baseless.

• SEBI's Clean Chit:

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) cleared Adani Ports & SEZ Ltd. and Adani Power Ltd. of allegations made by U.S.-based short seller Hindenburg Research.
- SEBI found that the group had not violated regulations as alleged.

• Findings of SEBI:

- Allegations in the Show Cause Notices (SCN) were not established.
- No case of manipulative or fraudulent transactions.
- No evidence of siphoning/diversion of funds.
- Transactions could not be classified as related-party transactions.
- All impugned transactions were settled with interest before the probe began.

• SEBI's Statement:

- No need to deliberate on penalties as liability was not established.
- Transactions do not qualify as unfair trade practices.

• Adani Group's Response:

- Gautam Adani welcomed the verdict, saying SEBI reaffirmed that Hindenburg's claims were baseless.
- He expressed sympathy for investors who lost money due to the "fraudulent and motivated report."



France erupts in protest over Macron's proposed fund cuts in public services



Mass protests and strikes erupted across France against Macron's proposed cuts to public services, with unions and workers accusing the government of worsening inequality while sparing the wealthy. The unrest follows earlier anger over pension reforms, showing deep public dissatisfaction with Macron's economic policies.

- **Cause of Anger:**
- President Emmanuel Macron's proposed cuts in funding for public services.
- Protesters fear cuts will:
 - Hurt low-paid and middle-class workers.
 - Collapse crucial public services like hospitals, schools, and welfare systems.
 - Benefit the wealthy and businesses, widening inequality.
- **Union and Worker Response:**
- Labour unions called for nationwide 'Block Everything' campaign.
- Protesters voiced anger over poverty, inequality, and high cost of living.
- Union leaders stressed that cuts were being forced while ordinary citizens "pay the price" for mismanagement.
- **Political Context:**
- Macron already unpopular for raising retirement age from 62 to 64 in 2023.
- His government aims to reduce budget deficit and public debt.
- Macron's proposals to cut jobs, freeze recruitment, and reform welfare have added to discontent.
- **Public Sentiment:**
- Protesters say it's "always our generation that pays with insecurity and debt."
- Critics argue Macron's policies favor the wealthy while ordinary people suffer.
- Everyday disruptions in transport and services fuel frustration.

U.K. deports first migrant to France under new deal

The U.K. has deported its first migrant to France under a new deal aimed at curbing illegal Channel crossings. The agreement follows a "one-in-one-out" system but faces legal hurdles and human rights concerns, especially regarding modern slavery cases.

First Deportation under New Deal:

- The U.K. deported its first migrant to France under a new migrant return deal signed in July 2024.

The Deal:

- Announced during French President Emmanuel Macron's State visit to the U.K. in July.
- For every migrant returned to France, the U.K. will accept a vetted migrant from France under a 'one-in-one-out' system.
- Priority will be given to migrants with U.K. ties.
- Deal valid until July 2026.

Government's Objective:

- To stop illegal migration via small boats across the English Channel.
- Part of U.K.'s crackdown on people smuggling gangs.
- Funding for Border Security increased by £100 million in August.

Challenges & Legal Issues:

- Deportation process has already faced legal challenges.
- Example: A 25-year-old Eritrean migrant was spared deportation after evidence suggested possible modern-day slavery.
- U.K. Home Office is reviewing the country's modern slavery legislation.

Official Statements:

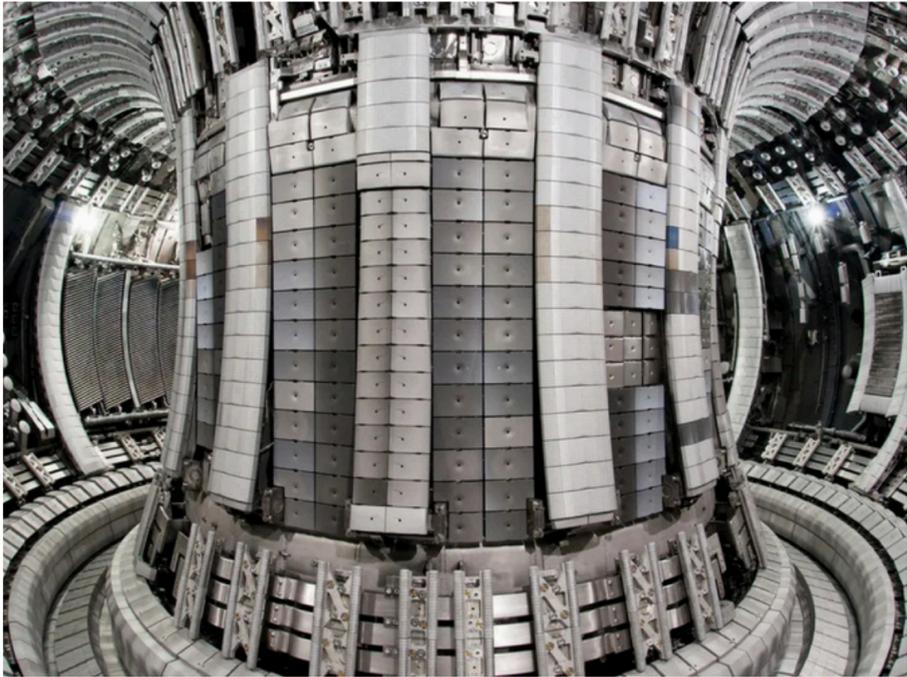
- U.K. Home Office said the move targets criminal networks profiting from human misery.
- More deportation flights scheduled in the coming weeks.
- Home Minister Shabid Mahmoud vowed to challenge "last-minute legal tactics" to block removals.



Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans d

The Tokamak is a doughnut-shaped experimental machine designed to harness fusion energy. Inside a Tokamak, the energy produced through the fusion of atoms is absorbed as heat in the vessel's walls. A fusion power plant will use this heat to produce steam and electricity through turbines and generators like a conventional power plant. Thus, Tokamak is Nuclear fusion reactor not a Nuclear Fission reactor.



Q2. Ans a

The Treaty of Tumlong was signed here in 1861 between the British and the Sikkim Rajah, and the treaty secured protection for travellers to Sikkim and guaranteed free trade, thereby making the state under British protectorate (British Protectorates was a status held by several of the former British territories within the British Empire) A turning point in the history of Sikkim involves the appointment of John Claude White as the Political Officer of Sikkim. Sikkim was a British Protectorate under the Treaty of Tumlong, signed in March 1861.



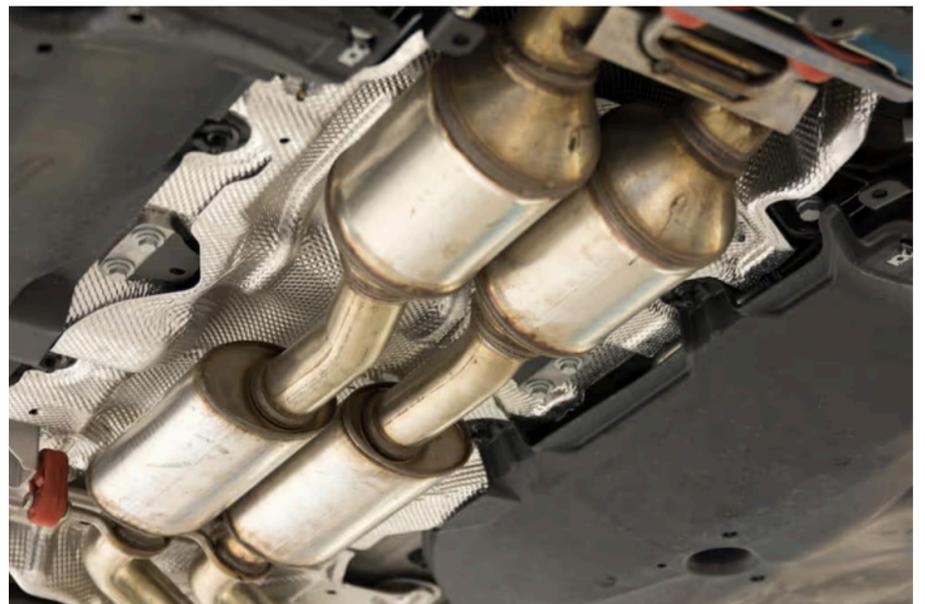
Q3. Ans a

The Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) is a permanent organ of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which serves to promote cooperation of member states against terrorism, separatism and extremism, which specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence. A permanent intergovernmental organization headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, tasked with coordinating counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and intelligence gathering among its member nations to combat the "Three Evils" of terrorism, separatism, and extremism



Q4. Ans d

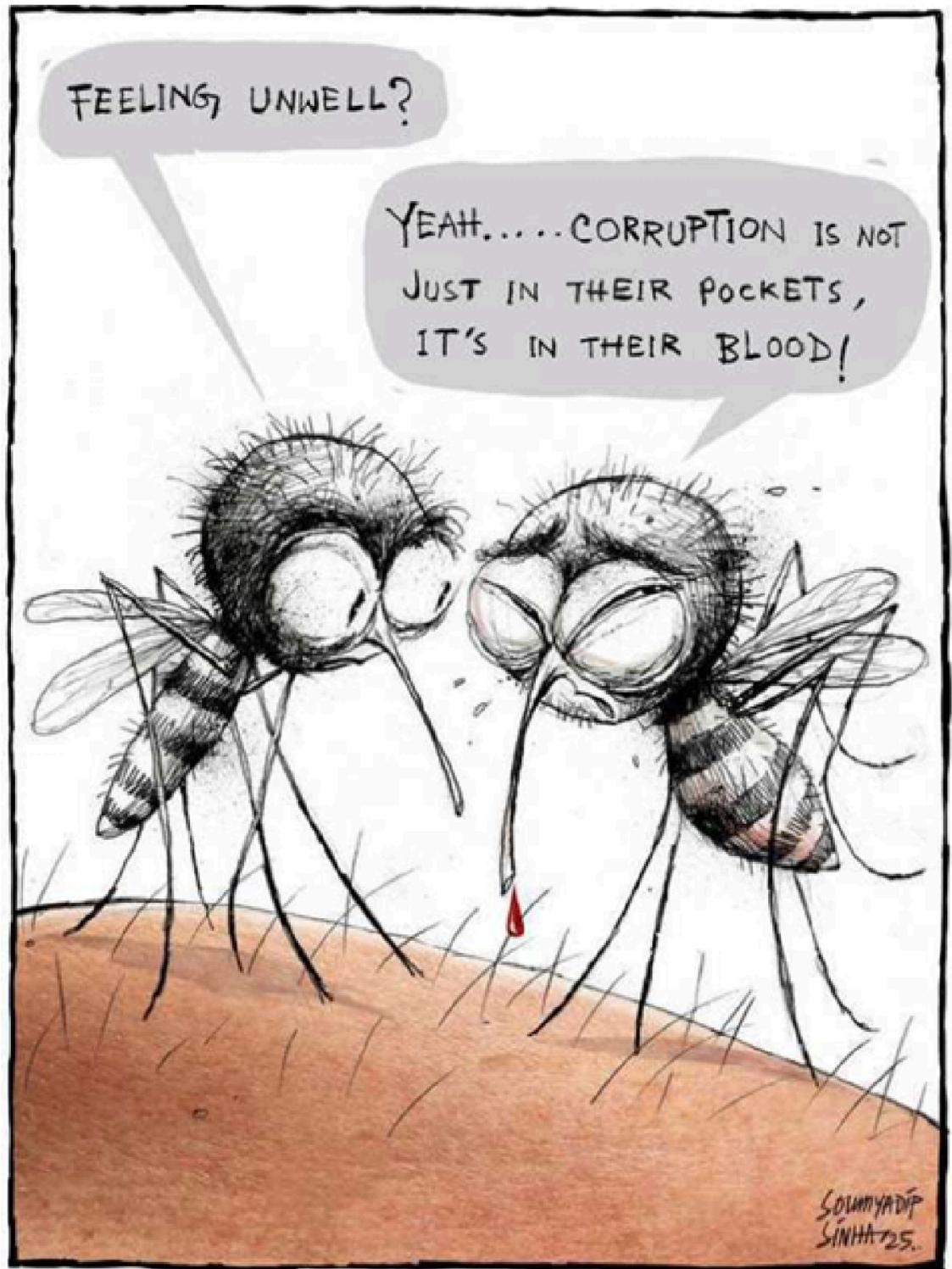
A catalytic converter is a device fixed in the exhaust system of a vehicle (front part) which is close to the engine and it to reduce the emission of gaseous pollutants, such as carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx) and hydrocarbons (HCs). It uses a chamber called a catalyst to convert the harmful compounds (toxic gases) from an engine's emissions into safe gases, like steam.



Case Study:



Wild cockatoos find a city sanctuary in Hong Kong- Critically endangered yellow-crested cockatoos found an unexpected sanctuary among Hong Kong's towering skyscrapers, but like their human neighbours they now face trouble finding a place to call home. Native to Indonesia and East Timor, the snow white birds, their crests flashing like yellow crowns, squawk through the urban parks of the Asian financial hub. They make up roughly 10% of the species' global wild population, which numbers only up to 2,000 mature birds. Research shows the city's cockatoo population has stagnated as the birds, which live in tree cavities, are losing natural nesting spaces in old trees due to typhoons and government tree trimming for public safety. That's adding to global pressures on cockatoos such as the illegal pet trade and climate change. Hong Kong's conservationists have stepped in with a solution — installing artificial nest boxes that mimic these natural hollows. And then they can continue to live in the city.



India's Golden Boy Neeraj Chopra injured. No throwback in Tokyo - finishes 8th in the Javelin final of the recent World Athletic Championships at Tokyo

