



Centre eases norms for clearing foreign-made COVID-19 vaccines

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U.S. President Biden promises to strengthen voting rights

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India exports surge 67% in May 2021, narrowing trade gap

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Kohli says WTC final against New Zealand will be fought on equal terms

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NEARBY



SC verdict today on Vinod Dua's petition

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce its judgment on Thursday on a petition filed by senior journalist and Padma Shri awardee Vinod Dua to quash a sedition case registered against him in Himachal Pradesh for his YouTube telecast on the north-east Delhi riots last year.

CITY PAGE 2

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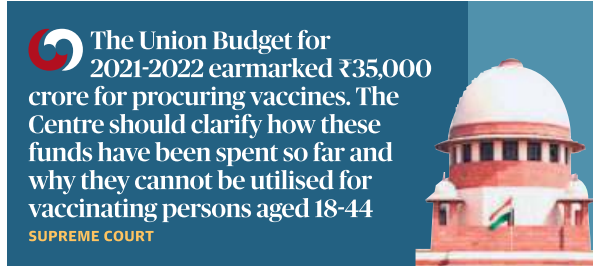
Why not buy 100% vaccines if you get discount, SC asks Centre

Bench questions Union govt.'s logic that it is getting the sop due to bulk orders

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has questioned the Centre's logic that manufacturers are selling it COVID-19 vaccines for a hefty discount because it places bulk orders. The court then asked the government why it cannot buy 100% of the vaccines at a discount instead of leaving the States to fend for themselves.

"The Central government justifying its lower prices on account of its ability to place large purchase orders for vaccines raises the issue as to why this rationale is not being employed for acquiring 100% of the monthly CDL



[Central Drugs Laboratory] doses," a Bench, led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, noted in a 32-page order.

The Centre can buy vaccines for ₹150, while the States have to shell out between ₹300 and ₹600.

"If the Central government's unique monopolistic buyer position is the only

reason for it receiving vaccines at a much lower rate from manufacturers, it is important for us to examine the rationality of the existing Liberalised Vaccination Policy against Article 14 [right to equality] of the Constitution since it could place severe burdens, particularly on States/Union Territories suf-

fering from financial distress," the court held.

It said the Centre, with a ₹35,000 crore budget to buy vaccines, has money to spare unlike the States which have suddenly been burdened with the task to cough up funds for vaccines. "The Union Budget for 2021-2022 earmarked ₹35,000 crore for procuring vaccines. In the light of the Liberalised Vaccination Policy, the Central government is directed to clarify how these funds have been spent so far and why they cannot be utilised for vaccinating persons aged 18-44," the court ordered.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

New IT rules don't apply to us, Google tells HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Google told the Delhi High Court on Wednesday that the new Information Technology Rules 2021, which came into effect late last month, did not apply to the U.S.-based tech giant as it was a "search engine" and not a "social media intermediary" like Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

On April 20, the High

Court issued a slew of directions on a petition by a woman who claimed her photographs and images, though not in themselves obscene or offensive, were taken from her Facebook and Instagram accounts without her consent, and uploaded on a pornographic website with derogatory captions added to them.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Court in Dominica adjourns hearing in Mehul Choksi case

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

Hearing began on Wednesday against fugitive businessman and diamond trader Mehul Choksi at a court in Dominica, where he is facing charges of entering the island territory illegally.

Opposing the public prosecutor in the court, Mr. Choksi's team said he was "traumatised" after being

tortured in custody of alleged kidnappers, who took him from his residence in nearby Antigua where he had acquired citizenship.

The hearing will continue on Thursday. The case had taken a turn against Mr. Choksi after Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne claimed that Mr. Choksi had left his residence there out of his free will with

a female companion and that Dominica should hand him over to the Indian authorities, who were expecting that country to carry out the International Red Corner Notice against Mr. Choksi, accused of defrauding the Punjab National Bank and the State Bank of India of ₹13,500 crore.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Palestine flays India's abstention

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

India's abstention from the latest resolution on the Palestinian issue suppresses human rights of "all people", Palestine's Foreign Minister Riad Malki has said.

In an unusually strong letter sent to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on May 30, Dr. Malki said the resolution titled "Ensuring respect for international human rights law and humanitarian law in Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem and in Israel" was a product of long years of multilateral negotiation. "Republic of India missed an opportunity to join the international community at this turning point on the path to justice and peace," he stated.

DETAILS ON PAGE 8

Himalayan task



Oil tankers crossing the snow-covered Rohtang Pass to reach Manali in Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday. •PTI

Tejpal case order seems a 'manual' for rape victims: HC

There is a case for considering leave for appeal, says judge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Hearing an appeal against the lower court judgment that acquitted journalist Tarun Tejpal of rape and sexual assault charges, the High Court of Bombay at Goa observed on Tuesday that "it seems like a manual for rape victims".

A Single Bench of Justice S.C. Gupte was hearing Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the State of Goa, challenging the judgment passed on May 21 by Additional Sessions Judge Kshama Joshi.

Mr. Mehta read out the 527-page judgment, "The victim's narrative is of extreme implausibility, and it is not possible to believe that she, a woman who is aware of laws,



Tarun Tejpal

intelligent, alert and physically fit [yoga trainer], would not push or ward off the accused if she got pushed against the wall. If the prosecutrix [victim] had held her jaw firmly closed, how would it be possible for the accused [Mr. Tejpal] to put his tongue into her mouth? If the prosecutrix pushed the accused instinctively and reflexively, why wouldn't she push the accused before he kissed

her?" He also pointed out portions on the behaviour of the victim during and before the incident.

The court quipped, "It is a kind of manual for rape victims, on the behaviour of victims. There is a case for considering leave for appeal."

Mr. Mehta said there were details of the victim's sexual history in the judgment, and the judge was a mute spectator to the defence divulging them. He urged the court to redact names of senior counsels who the victim approached before filing the complaint. However, the court said it was a vacation court and adjourned the matter to June 24.

JUDGMENT WILL DETER RAPE VICTIMS PAGE 8

Wary of COVID-19, 8 convicts refuse parole

Mysuru jail inmates see greater danger of being exposed to the infection outside

LAIQH A. KHAN
MYSURU

At least eight convicts lodged in the Mysuru Central Jail in Karnataka have refused to go home on the 90-day parole offered to eligible inmates to decongest prisons in the wake of the second wave of COVID-19. They said the probability of contracting the virus was higher outside. They also feared that they may not be able to earn a livelihood amid the lockdown.

While more than 75 inmates had walked out of the Mysuru jail during the last few days, eight turned down the offer. Two more eligible convicts were undergoing treatment for COVID-19 and the jail authorities were yet to hear



To leave or not to: A view of the entrance of the Central Prison in Mysuru, Karnataka. •M.A. SRIRAM

from them on whether they would take parole or not.

The jail authorities began releasing convicts and undertrials on COVID-19 parole in the second week of May to decongest the prison, which houses about 750 inmates, as per the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court last year.

Mysuru Jail Superintendent Divyashree told *The Hindu* that while 63 inmates who were offered parole during the first wave of COVID-19 last year had accepted it and returned to jail, they were faced with a peculiar situation this year. "This year, eight inmates have refused to return home.

They claim that they feel safe from COVID-19 inside the jail," she said. Though a few inmates tested positive in the last few days and had been treated, almost all the 700 inmates of the Mysuru jail, who were above 45 years, had been given the first dose of the vaccine. Many inmates in the 18 to 44 age group had also been given the first dose, while all the staff members had finished both their doses.

Some refused parole in view of the livelihood challenges that people were facing during the lockdown.

The inmates have to remit ₹1,000 as surety before being let out on parole, but the amount would be returned on their return to the jail.

Bail for 7 accused of stealing shrouds in U.P.

Refurbished and repackaged cloth allegedly sold as that of a Gwalior company

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

A local court in Uttar Pradesh's Baghat has granted bail to seven persons, including three cloth traders related to each other, after the police failed to produce evidence regarding the fake stickers and ribbons they allegedly used to sell the cloth made by repackaging shrouds stolen by them from crematoriums and graveyards.

The seven were arrested last month on charges of allegedly stealing pieces of cloths used as shrouds in crematoriums and graveyards before cleaning them and packing them with fake stickers and ribbons of a Gwalior company. They allegedly sold the repackaged cloth for a good price in the market.



The accused were arrested on May 9. •U.P. POLICE VIA TWITTER

While arresting them, the police had claimed to have recovered over 500 pieces of shrouds and other cloth items from them.

Judge Sazia Nazir Zaidi, session judge (in-charge) in the bail order dated June 1, noted that the prosecution neither produced any document regarding any criminal case previously filed in the matter nor the fake stickers

and ribbons of a Gwalior company allegedly used by the accused to market the refurbished shrouds.

'Falsely implicated'

The accused pleaded that they were falsely implicated and said that the cloth recovered from them were not shrouds, stolen or otherwise.

The accused persons, Pra-

vin Jain and his son Ashish Jain, run a cloth store in Baraut, while their relative Rishab Jain, who runs a separate store, was visiting them on the day of their arrest on May 9, the accused said. The other four persons - Shrawan Kumar Sharma, Raju, Bablu and Shahrukh - are Mr. Pravin's staffers who were allegedly working from home due to the lockdown.

The Jain father-son argued that due to the lockdown, they were asserting "cut-piece cloth after setting them right" and packing them. The accused have submitted bills towards proving that they purchased the cloth.

The court said the cloth allegedly recovered from the traders and shown to be shrouds would be a matter of evidence.

Meghalaya MLA faces rape charge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

The Opposition Congress in Meghalaya has demanded the removal of an MLA accused of raping a woman from the committees of the 60-member Assembly.

The police on Tuesday confirmed that a woman had lodged an FIR against National People's Party (NPP) legislator Thomas Sangma for allegedly abusing her sexually.

The NPP heads a coalition government, with the BJP as a constituent. The legislator, representing the Tura Assembly constituency, is also the chief advisor to Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma.

In a letter to Speaker Metbah Lyngdoh, former Minister and senior Congress leader Ampareen Lyndoh said the Tura MLA must be removed from the House committees because of the seriousness of the charges against him.

Mr. Sangma is the Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Estimates and a member of the Committee on Public Accounts.

60 lakh people affected due to Cyclone Yaas, says Odisha govt.

'The natural disaster also caused financial loss to the tune of ₹610 crore'

SATYASUNDAR BARIK BHUBANESWAR

A week after very severe cyclonic storm, Yaas, struck Odisha coast, the State government on Wednesday said 60 lakh people in 11,000 villages were affected while the natural disaster caused loss to the tune of ₹610 crore.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reviewed the loss incurred due to Cyclone Yaas and post-cyclone restoration activities here. The cyclone had made a landfall in Balasore district affecting many northern and coastal districts on May 26 and 27. The government had then announced to complete damage assessment within a week.

CM lauds efforts

'The district administrations had made commendable efforts to save lives of people. They had also completed restoration within in a very short time. We need to document right from



Seawater inundates agricultural fields during landfall of Cyclone Yaas at Chandipur in Balasore district. FILE PHOTO: PTI

prediction of cyclone, our preparedness, evacuation of people, cyclone's landfall and our response so that it will help us in disaster management in the future," said Mr. Patnaik.

Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra and Special Relief Commissioner P. K. Jena briefed the Odisha Chief Minister about loss caused by the cyclone and

post-cyclone restoration works.

'A total of 150 villages were submerged in the storm. Saline water damaged standing crop in vast agricultural fields,' said Mr. Mohapatra.

'About 60 lakh people in 11,000 villages were affected by Cyclone Yaas. The loss of government infrastructure in the cyclone was to the

tune of ₹520 crore while private assets worth ₹90 crore were lost. The total loss was ₹610 crore while ₹66 crore is required for carrying out relief work,' said Mr. Jena. According to report, schools, anganwadi centres and panchayat roads suffered damage worth ₹277 crore.

Power restored

As far as power restoration is concerned, 99.8% of 30 lakh affected consumers have been supplied electricity. As many as 230 transformers had to be replaced. The total loss to energy infrastructure was ₹150 crore. Similarly, 246 roads were damaged in the cyclone.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced ₹500 crore as immediate relief assistance for the State after reviewing impact of the cyclone in Odisha and West Bengal. However, an inter-ministerial team is likely to visit the State to assess the extent of damage.

Examine excessive powers given to GST panel: Badal

'GST Council nod must for decisions'

VIKAS VASUDEVA CHANDIGARH

Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal has asked the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to examine with 'all seriousness', what he termed 'excessive delegation' of powers to GST implementation committee (GIC).

In a letter written to Ms. Sitharaman in the backdrop of the recently held GST Council meeting, Mr. Badal said in the meeting he raised the issue of the need to obtain the Council's approval for decisions taken by the GIC. The GIC involves bureaucrats, which takes decisions in the period between Council meetings.

Pointing out that Punjab's decision to proffer this concern emanates not from any desire for deliberate fault finding, but to enhance the Council's ability to collectively make decisions that are backed by consensus and unsusceptible to potential future legal challenges, Mr. Badal said he deemed it necessary to



Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal

clarify the State's intent because despite some support from other States during the meeting, Punjab's observations were not well received and the discussions that followed were tangential and inconclusive.

'Examine issue'

'It is my firm conviction that this issue is of the utmost importance and must be examined with all seriousness by the Finance Ministry, and perhaps even considered in consultation with the Law Ministry and the Advocate General,' said Mr. Badal.

No cell phone use on duty: Bihar DGP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PATNA

Bihar Director General of Police S.K. Singhal has asked policemen and officials on duty not to use mobile phones, other electronic devices and social media as it "affects image of the police".

"It has come to notice that mobile phones and other electronic devices are being used unnecessarily by policemen and officials on duty. The unnecessary use of mobile phones and connecting with social media for their personal entertainment distracts attention of policemen from their responsibilities which impacts their capabilities and efficiency and this also comes off as indiscipline," Mr Singhal said.

"Such conducts affect the image of the police among common people and media too brings this into light, which has a negative impact on the impression of the police force. So, policemen and other officials are directed not to use mobiles and other electronic devices on duty," the DGP said.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE DEATH Kapil Kakar 1956 - 2021 The love and laughter of our lives, Taken away in swift flight... Forgive us and pride Your teachings we will abide.

Smt. Vanaja Ramesh DOB: 10-06-1956 - DOD: 29-5-2021 AMMA - one word that supersedes the meaning of love, care, affection & even GOD. My mother has exhibited the true way of living spiritually and as well as a human.

SAD DEMISE DEATH ANNIVERSARIES 2nd YEAR ANNIVERSARY R. MEENAKSHI (81) alias Jiji Passed away on 1st June 2021 Cremated on same day.

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Manjhi-Sahani meet sparks speculation The leaders are said to be disenchanted with Bihar govt. has set tongues wagging since they have of late been critical of the ruling NDA while being soft on the Opposition RJD leader Lalu Prasad.

विशेष शाखा पुलिस मुख्यालय, मध्यप्रदेश भोपाल दिनांक 01/06/2021 निविदा सूचना का शुद्धि पत्र (Corrigendum)

झारखण्ड सरकार कार्यालयक अभियंता का कार्यालय ग्रामीण विकास विशेष प्रमंडल, गिरिडीह शुद्धि पत्र (स्थगन सूचना)

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY SIGNAL & TELECOMMUNICATION BRANCH OPEN TENDER NIT No. - JBP-N-Tele-Tender-2021-2

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE SR. NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH. NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER. NIT No. - JBP-N-Tele-Tender-2021-2

Punjab Cabinet nod for Special Purpose Vehicle

It will operate water supply schemes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Cabinet on Wednesday gave the approval for the creation of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for the operation and maintenance of large multi-village surface water supply schemes across the State in a bid to ensure sustainably long-term supply of potable water in rural areas of districts where water quality has been adversely affected.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Amarinder Singh. This first such SPV in India will be a utility company, the 'Punjab Rural Water (Utility) Company', under the Water Supply and Sanitation Department, said an official statement.

The Chief Minister also approved the opening of an account in the name of the SPV, with seed money of ₹25 crore allocated from the World Bank's funds (64%) and the State budget (36%). This will support the SPV's functioning in the initial five years of its operations.

The allocation will help meet the shortfall in revenue collection, if any, to fulfil contractual obligations of the SPV, and its administrative expenses, added the statement.

The Water Supply and Sanitation Department is currently in the process of executing five new multi-village surface water supply projects covering 612 villages of Amritsar, Tarn Taran and Gurdaspur districts.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Auction Notice No.: 04/2021-22 E-Auction Program for the Month of June-2021

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HOW Houdini escaped lockdown

Lean towards your computer, and pull a coin out of your ear. Join bright, amateur magicians who are using this extended time at home to learn tricks and impress classmates, families and grandchildren

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Many magicians work on perfecting the disappearing act. But in the case of Amaan Mahtani, it is his family that does the disappearing act, when he has a trick to practise on them... for the 10th time in a day.

The 11-year-old magic enthusiast spends at least four hours every weekend and an hour-and-a-half on weekdays, perfecting his craft. A fan of magic ever since his grandfather showed him the disappearing thumb trick at the age of six, Amaan says he managed to seriously pursue magic when the lockdown last year made everything go virtual, and outdoor play time shrunk drastically. "I took a magic course on Udemy, and constantly keep learning from YouTube channels such as MLT Magic Tricks, EvanEraTV and Spidey-Hypnosis," he says.

Amaan's repertoire now includes 30 tricks, including mentalism. "I came up with a few myself after a lot of trial and error," he says. As we speak over a video call, he makes sponge balls disappear and reappear out of thin air. Gradually, his friends too became invested in the hobby. "I give them a few pointers but never part with secrets of the trade," he laughs, adjusting his bow tie — Amaan's always dressed for the part, with dreams of making it to *America's Got Talent* some day.

Thanks to free classes on YouTube channels, many have been drawn into the fascinating world of magic. International entertain-

ers such as Penn and Teller are available on MasterClass teaching their skills for a small fee. "Knowing a few fun tricks can make one stand out at parties and other gatherings. It's also a great ice-breaker," says Chennai-based magician Arun Loganathan who has been teaching the craft for the last few years.

Since 2020, he started taking virtual classes for students of all age groups — seven to 70 — from within the country as well as Switzerland, the US and Papua New Guinea. This means a lot of late nights and early mornings for Arun. "I have woken up at 3.30 am to teach a student in Philadelphia," he says.

"The demand has gone up by 65% in one year," says Arun adding that people are comfortable with online classes as they are more accessible and customised. His students are a mix of novices and those that learn off YouTube, who then approach him to learn advanced magic or the finesse and flourishes that go with the act. It is interesting to note that people do not mind spending hefty sums on acquiring a skill that may just be for recreational purposes; some of Arun's interna-

tional clients pay upto a lakh for 30 days.

Magicians are normally known to bamboozle their audience but Arun sometimes feels the tables turn when his young students already know the trick he is teaching and come up with different techniques to solve it. Thanks to Arun's experience of over two decades in the field, he finds ways to keep challenging them.

While kids form 60% of the student base, magician Nikhil Raj from Bengaluru notices that his sessions for adults are mostly booked by corporates. "I conduct a 50-minute session for them which includes mentalism, illusions, conjuring and hypno-



"You don't get into magic, magic gets into you"
DAVID BLAINE



Alahamora (Clockwise from top left) Amaan Mahtani practises a set; Penn & Teller demonstrate a trick; and Akshaya performing on stage ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND MASTERCLASS

skills. "Magic workshops are a lot more than just learning tricks. It prepares you to face any situation that might arise during a show. There could be hecklers... You need to deal with them in a calm manner and make them your fan," says magician Akshaya over a call from Pune.

Trained by her father, the 25-year-old has been performing on stage since she was three. She did her last show this year in Goa, in the month of April, and was all set to perform at a wedding in New York later this year, when the second wave of COVID-19 disrupted all plans.

"COVID-19 is the reason I started teaching online last year in September, otherwise I would have never done it," says Akshaya, who has conducted over 40 classes in the last eight months. Though she believes that magic should be experienced live, she says, "Virtual has its own charm and advantages. A lot of things can be done virtually that may not have been possible in a live show. But I can't disclose what they are," she laughs mysteriously.

Flair of the craft

Learning magic requires a lot of patience, hard work and constant practice. Not all students have the discipline to persevere. Those that stay are the ones with undying curiosity and dogged determination. "There is a saying, 'You don't get into magic, magic gets into you!'," says Akshaya.

"There is a joy when people look in wonder and ask 'how did you do it?'," says Amaan, who often practises in front of the mirror — not because he is vain — to make sure he can see himself performing from all angles. "You have to make sure that you don't give away anything from any angle," he adds.

Akshaya records her practice sessions to make sure every movement is going according to plan. Sleight of hand is important. "You can learn the basics but you have to train your hands too," is the common refrain.

While practitioners of this art form are often associated with vibrant costumes, over the top equipment and material, Arun, Nikhil and Akshaya are being practical and keeping it simple for now. "Because of the lockdown not everyone can access materials and kits, so it is best to use household items like pens, coins, cardboard..." says Nikhil. "Ultimately, what matters is the finesse with which one performs a trick."

ism," says 25-year-old Nikhil, whose dad was also a magician.

Although Nikhil has been conducting workshops for many years, the last year has been especially busy with over 500 children taking online classes. Sometimes parents learn along with their kids, at times it is

the grandparents who learn to entertain their grandchildren... the clientele is diverse. After completing their course, many of them also put up virtual shows for their families and friends.

Nikhil says that his workshops also weave in personality development and communication



Something old, something new
The retrofitted 1948 Volkswagen Beetle and Jawaad Khan ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Beetle's internal combustion engine with lithium-ion batteries, taking care to ensure they sourced the perfect motor, gearbox and batteries to suit both the car and the major's requirements.

Using the term 'retrofitted' to describe the internal makeover he gives cars, Khan believes this method can help India reach its 2030 EV goal. "I knew my design could make electric cars more popular without adding new cars on Indian roads."

He founded Tadpole Projects, a start-up currently working with IIT-Delhi. "It is not just rare models — a lot of people are sentimental about their first cars or family heirlooms. Sadly, most of these cars don't pass emission control norms. Retrofitting them is an eco-friendly solution."

"We have converted four cars till now. Two vintage vehicles — the major's 1948 VW Beetle and 1946 Austin as well as two modern cars — a Swift DZire and a Honda City. Retrofitting a car can cost between three lakh to nine lakh rupees, and based on the model it can achieve a mileage of 80-500 kilometres."

"When it was finally ready and I drove it for the first time I was pleasantly surprised. It was smooth and soundless. While it has lost its 'classic' status, it drives far better than it did with a petrol engine," says Maj Rajain.

The Department of Posts introduced a rubber stamp earlier this year, commemorating the successful conversion of the Beetle from classic to eco-friendly. As for Maj Rajain's 1948 VW electric Beetle, he donated it to CERCA and it is now permanently stationed at the IIT campus where visitors can view it.

The Beetle scuttles again

How the classic was transformed into an electric, eco-friendly car in IIT-Delhi

RUTH DHANARAJ

Thanks to a new method developed at IIT-Delhi, owners of vintage cars need not keep their beauties locked up. The 1948 VW Beetle and 1946 Austin can now zoom out on the streets, retrofitted to be electric and so, eco-friendly.

"I acquired a 1948 Volkswagen Beetle around 14 years ago. The car originally belonged to the German Ambassador to Nepal and I added it to my collection," says Major Manjith Rajain (retired), speaking from Gurugram.

"I don't call myself a collector. I acquire cars that I can restore and use as I believe these beautiful cars should be kept in running condition and enjoyed, not just locked up for a few private eyes," adds Maj Rajain, who also owns a Chevy 1926, a Morris Eight and a Morris Minor At-

lantic, among other rarities.

Maj Rajain recalls how his first grandchild loved riding with him in the Chevy. "On one hand, I was aware that we were polluting the atmosphere by driving these vintage models. At the same time, I wanted my granddaughter to enjoy this car."

As luck would have it, a conversation with his friend, Arun Duggal, founder of Centre of Excellence for Research on Clean Air (CERCA) at IIT-Delhi, led them to a solution.

"Converting a classic car into an electric one would still preserve its beauty and charm, and at the same time address the issue of pollution," says Duggal. Earlier in 2019, one of Duggal's acquaintances had seen the prototype of a 'converted' electric car at the Inno-Fest global summit in Singapore presented by Jawaad Khan,

a student of Electrical Engineering from Swami Vivekanand Institute of Engineering and Technology (SVIET) in Punjab. Following the summit, Khan was invited to IIT-Delhi where he met with Duggal and Rajain, and the project to make the Beetle eco-friendly took off.

2030 EV goal in sight

Hailing from Chenab Valley in Jammu, Khan (23) says he used to tinker with machines even as a young boy. While a student at SVIET, he converted a Maruti 800 into an electric vehicle for his college project. Named SVIET Volta, the car quickly garnered a lot of attention and won him a sponsorship to the Inno-Fest. Working over a period of six months, Khan replaced the



Don't let sleeping dogs lie

Are your pets getting their fair share of exercise and mood boosters during the lockdown?



DEEPA ALEXANDER

While every dog has its day, for over a year now, six-year-old Roger has not. The German Shepherd who loves long walks, used to sniff out interesting corners and quizzically cock his ears as he watched birds build nests. He now spends most of the pandemic watching clouds flit past from the apartment window. He has gained weight and is mostly bored — his new-found past-time is endlessly licking his paws.

"A number of dogs exhibit Obsessive Compulsive Behaviour such as incessant licking of paws, resulting in inflammation and wounds. They also develop an obsession with food due to the lack of anything else to keep them occupied," says Chennai-based veterinarian Dr Priyadarshini Govind.

An alumna of Madras Veterinary College, Dr Priyadarshini also holds a postgraduate diploma in Behavioural Medicine from the University of Sydney and specialises in treating companion animals and pet birds.

Unlike the wild sheep in Wales that ran riot on the roads during the pandemic and the



Exercise is key Walking your pet with adequate precautions in place can keep them healthy; Dr Priyadarshini Govind ■ RAVINDRAN AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

leopards roaming backyards in Bengal, pets have been house-bound like their owners. Weight gain from lack of exercise has been a condition most veterinarians are seeing.

"I haven't heard of any Government restrictions to people walking their dogs, but pet parents have generally become lazy or probably are just too self-preserving due to the pandemic," says Dr Priyadarshini,

adding "Even in normal circumstances, some canine parents walks their dogs only under duress. The pandemic has become an excuse to not walk them at all. Dogs are intelligent animals and need a lot of activity to engage their mind and body to prevent unwanted behavioural patterns. While dogs enjoy the company of their humans, it is still important that they be kept occupied."

While the problems are not breed-specific and affect both indie and foreign dogs, the pandemic has had a very different effect on cats.

"Cats are a fairly independent species who while they love their human companions value their time alone. They don't constantly seek approval from their caregivers. With families staying in and people working from home it has resulted in stress-related disorders among cats such as feline lower urinary tract disease and excessive grooming."

But given the stringent lockdown how can this be prevented? "For dogs, even an outing outside your gate or a run in the terrace helps. Also, over-use of strong disinfectants that result in skin-related contact dermatitis and foot issues should be avoided. Dogs and cats are genetically sensitive to disinfectants that are safe for humans. There are a number of pet-friendly options. We do know that the Coronavirus is airborne but there is no need for us to assume our animals are going to be bringing in infection because they go out for walks."

On the number of people buying pets to stave off loneliness, Dr Priyadarshini comments, "It's not a great idea. People bought puppies for thousands from breeders but they weren't open to adopting a stray rescue or even a rescued pet of a person who had succumbed to the virus. You should be able to continue giving your pet the time and care even when things return to normal. Unless you are ready to do that it's best not to get one."

