

## Poll dancing



by Avtar Singh

**S**o the footsie and the phone calls and the sexting come to an end. This fortnight it's time to choose your bachelor/ette. Behind the first door, the grand old party, fronted by our own grand old lady. Its USP is that it claims to know governance better than anyone else, because it has been governing longer than anyone else. Behind the door immediately to the right, the pretender that doesn't admit to being one. The one that gets in the mithai every time because it feels this time it has to win. Its USP: that it understands the common man, by virtue of having been powerless for so long.

Behind a door that doesn't understand where it belongs, to the right or left, lurks the new entrant. It allies itself with the common man as well (who doesn't—once every five years or so?), but it seems happy enough to ask for the dismissal of governments before their appointed times, never mind that the “common man” voted them in in the first place.

Haphazardly strewn across the Delhi landscape are a few other

doors. Behind one is the party that claims to represent the Sikhs. There's one that caters to the interests of the Dalits. No doubt if I looked long enough I'd find one that represents me.

Or not.

The Election Commission has kindly thrown in a button that says “none of the above”. But what does NOTA actually mean? It's been clarified already that even if NOTA gets the most votes in a constituency, the next actual candidate will stand elected. So it is, as the EC puts it, symbolic. The EC was instructed to provide the button by the Supreme Court, did so, and now will wait to see how the button, its reception and further ramifications “evolve” over time. Apparently the best we can hope for, if NOTA were actually to prevail somewhere, is that the political parties – not hitherto noted for being thin-skinned – will be so abashed by this rejection of their electoral options, that they will mend their ways in the future. In other words, more chintan shivirs will be planned, attended and left in the dust. Just what the common man needs.

So what are you to do if you're still looking for your particular door? You could lay in supplies before the electoral dry days and spend them getting pissed with your friends, loudly telling anybody who'll listen you can't be arsed to vote, it's not worth it, not with this lineup of crooks, incompetents and hypocrites.

You could go with NOTA, secure that you've done your bit to register your displeasure.

Or you could actually engage with

the process. You could research your local candidates. Choose the one with the most quality, or at best the one who'll do the least damage. You could ignore their parties or engage with their larger politics, overlooking their worst excesses, and fastening on to their successes. It's what most of us do, after all. Those of us who aren't voting blindly for a party or a candidate. Or even a symbol because our families or our communities always have.

Democracy is flawed, and it's very, very complicated. You don't always get the people you want representing you, at any stage of the game. After any normal election a shitload of people are left grumbling over the person who actually won because they didn't vote for him or her. But that's the thing.

For all the talk of empowering the common man, I'd like to point out how humbling this electoral cycle is for people like us. And that is how it should be.

So. You want to exercise some electoral vanity and register your middle class, middle-of-the-road displeasure with the candidates on your ballot roll? Don't vote NOTA. If

you want to show the system and its parties the finger, stay at home and get drunk. It comes to the same thing, because one of those people you don't like is still going to get elected. He or she will represent you anyway. So vote. Do the research and the math, weigh your options, hold your nose and press the button against the least pernicious option if you have to.

There is no point bitching about a party you didn't attend. The invite's right there.



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## METROPOLIS

### Strange tales from our international brethren

#### Wheel of fortune



India may be crazy about cricket, but in Australia it's the

sport of cycling that holds centre-stage. The state of Victoria recently held a three-week festival called “Cycle Salute,” that celebrated people's love for the two-wheeler. The programme included over 50 events, including races, mountain rides, cycle parades and rodeo shows. Many cycle enthusiasts got the chance to show off their recreational vehicles in the “show and shine” parade. From the professional cyclist to the ones who can't balance without trainer wheels, there was something for all.

#### Tales from the crypt



Our counterparts in the Big Apple recently stumbled

upon a site that's fit to freak anyone out. Diedinhouse.com tells people if anyone has died in their current home, as well as the number of people who did. All one has to do is pay \$11.99 and submit their US house address, leaving the rest of the job for the site to finish. Spooky? That's not all. The site informs you of exactly how the person died. The purpose behind this is for you to know the value of your property – as no one would pay a million dollars to own a house where someone was murdered (we sincerely hope).

#### Flower power



A new high-end nightclub, Fleurs (flowers in French), just opened

its doors to the public. It will be open on Thursday and Friday nights and has the capacity to fit 300 guests. The club, taking its name quite literally, is shaped like a flower, with a petal-shaped floor. Not just that – patrons are expected to buy flowers and shower them on stage if they like the night's performance. Here's hoping this newly planted fleur reaches its full bloom.