

Half step down



by Avtar Singh

As I write this, we've had a successful election, in that more Dilliwalas showed up to exercise their franchise than ever before. Unfortunately, we didn't have the good collective sense to elevate a single party to power, so as of the time of writing, we look set for another election in the very near future. Which seems a bit of a shame. Not that it's expensive or anything. Or even that a summer election may see a relatively lower turnout than one in nice sunny early winter. But don't our elected representatives – because that is what they are, once the results are in – owe it to the people who chose them to get on with the business of forming a government?

Could it be that a series of fractured verdicts will consign Delhi to President's Rule and constantly recurring elections till one party finally wins it all? Is that really serving the cause of democracy?

Ours not to reason why, however. Ours but to stand in line and get our nails painted till we can all decide on who runs our little corner of paradise. Or till the various parties do. While they eye each other and

adjust themselves, however, there are encouraging signs for the year – and election – to come.

A "womanifesto", designed by women from Delhi and unambiguously endorsed by our outgoing chief minister, is a clearly spelt out action plan that takes in education, a legal framework that includes more judges, sensitised cops and better laws, and support for survivors of attacks, sexual and otherwise. This plan needs to be taken up by whoever forms the government, and they need to be held accountable if it isn't executed. Any party not on board with the programme needs to explain why. Before the election. So they can pay the price for it where it really matters.

The farce being played out on the national stage over Section 377 needs to have its echo in Delhi as well. If there is to be an election, let the politics currently on display inform your future choice. Groups that behave in a cavalier fashion with the rights of Indian citizens need to be held accountable for those positions. This past election, inconclusive as it was, showed that Delhi was ready for a change. Politics that panders to medievalists, cure-bearing contortionists and sundry other idiots needs to be kicked out of the city as well.

But mostly, what is nice is that, regardless of who forms the government, now or in a few months time, something has already changed. The absolutes of what went before have been discarded. This past election, inconclusive though it was, was nonetheless monumental in that huge swathes of the city exercised their franch-

ise in ways that were completely unexpected. We may not agree on the results – how could we? That's what an inconclusive result entails – but we can surely agree that any party, now or in the future, will have to be more receptive of what the electorate, that fecklessly heterogeneous organism, itself wants.

The slow process of not being taken for granted – helped along, among other things, by anger over corruption, the horrors of last December and a lack of governance in every part of our lives – seems to have penetrated the hides of even those people and institutions most invested in preserving the status quo.

I don't think there's any sort of spring in the air. It's too cold for that. The shoots of change need the warmth to truly flower and perhaps what this city needs is another election in a few months that makes us think about where we actually are and what we've actually gained.

But if it does come to that, use the information we're receiving, minute by minute, process the lessons we're learning every day, try and see the wood from the trees, when the same goons come knocking on your door. See who has been the most contrite for past failings, who the least triumphalist over this season's petty victories. Who has actually thought about what this past election means, and who believes that it really doesn't matter, it's just another spin of the wheel. Because they will come knocking. They have to. The thing is to keep them listening. Will it last? Who knows.

But if it doesn't, you know whose fault it will be.

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METROPOLIS Strange tales from our international brethren

Ghost ship

TimeOut Stockholm

Stockholm's Vasamuseet or Vasa Museum is home to the largest

and best-preserved 17th-century ship of its kind, Vasa, which sank on her maiden voyage. Visitors can walk around the exterior of the 225ft-long warship and view the decks from six levels. No one's allowed on board, but you can walk through a recreation of one of the gun decks. To make things a bit eerie, an exhibit near the keep displays the skeletons of ten people who died aboard the Vasa.

Disco run

TimeOut Melbourne

In what blurs the line between fitness and fun, the Australian city saw its first Electric Run.

Runners armed with LED bracelets, glow necklaces, glow sunglasses and other such disco paraphernalia moved through a five kilometer course to be welcomed at a large party at the finish line. Along the way, the runners will cross tunnels, glowing lakes, glowing arches, say hello to glowing cacti and coloured fountains. The reward for completing the run is a large gathering of runners in a party filled with neon trees, lasers, glowing beach balls and DJs.

Plastic wear

TimeOut Abu Dhabi

A clothing company called D-Grade is taking recycling to a

whole new level. The clothing brand takes plastic bottles, breaks them down into a plastic yarn and weaves it into everyday wear. The process involves extruding plastic into fibre and spinning yarn. The resultant fabric is as comfortable as cotton blends and requires no ironing, claims the company. The plastic, found in ordinary drinking water bottles, contains the same polymer as that used in manufacturing polyester. D-Grade uses plastic water bottles, shampoo bottles, yoghurt tubs and milk bottles.