



Derision, for long, was the safest way to deal with queerness in mainstream Bollywood. But the industry seems finally ready to break the mould

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Face-off, masks off

Much more than 70 seats are at stake in the Delhi Assembly elections that just ended. Why AAP, BJP are waiting anxiously for the count

BIG PICTURE PAGES 10-11

The Flu

4,000 km away from Wuhan, Kerala leans back on its Nipah experience to tackle the coronavirus outbreak



ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE OUT ON TUESDAY

Delhi chooses AAP, exit polls predict

Pollsters say Arvind Kejriwal-led party set to form govt again, BJP in second place, Congress not in the reckoning

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 8

THE AAM Aadmi Party is set to return to power in the national capital, all exit polls released after close of polling on Saturday suggested. While the party had come to power with a majority of 67 in the Delhi House of 70 seats in the 2015 Assembly polls, most pollsters this time gave them more than 50 seats.

According to the exit polls, the BJP will improve on the tally of three seats it got the last time, but still finish a distant second. The Congress, like the last time, seems to be a non-player in the national capital, with most polls giving it 0-2 seats.

The past month had seen two very different campaigns run by the AAP and BJP — with the former asking people to vote on the basis of its work, and the latter focusing its campaign around Shaheen Bagh, where protests against the new citizenship law have been on for almost two months now.

The India Today Axis survey gave the AAP 59-68 seats, and

the BJP 2-11 seats. The Times Now-IPSOS survey gave AAP 47 and the BJP 23, while NewsX-Polstrat gave AAP 50-56 seats and BJP 10-14 seats. ABP News-CVoter gave the AAP 49-63 seats, and the BJP 5-19 seats.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said it was clear that people had voted for development. "The city has voted for education and for the work we did. They have completely rejected the politics of hate," he said.

A senior party leader said their calculation shows the AAP's tally will touch 60. "I think exit polls are a little careful. According to our estimate, our tally will cross 60 seats," he said.

Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari tweeted that the exit polls were incorrect. "All these exit polls will fail. The BJP will win 48 seats and form the government in Delhi. Please don't blame EVMs. Save this tweet," he wrote.

Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra said: "These exit polls are never accurate. They failed in Maharashtra and Haryana. We are hopeful we will have a good number of seats this time. Let us wait for the final results."



Voters wait outside a polling station at a government school in East Delhi on Saturday. Amit Mehra

Despite push to get voters out, turnout 61.7%, down from 2015

ARANYA SHANKAR
 NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 8

AROUND 61.71% voters turned out to vote in the Delhi Assembly elections, as per figures released by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) at 11 pm Saturday. The final outcome, the CEO said, would only have "fractional changes". This is significantly lower than 2015, when the turnout was 67.12%.

However, it surpassed the figures of last year's Lok Sabha elections, when 60.60% voters had come to the polling booths. The voting figures remained low till about 1 pm, when just 31.69% voters had cast their votes. It picked up pace in the second half. Voting began at 8 am and continued till 6 pm officially. Anyone who entered the polling booth by 6 pm was allowed to vote.

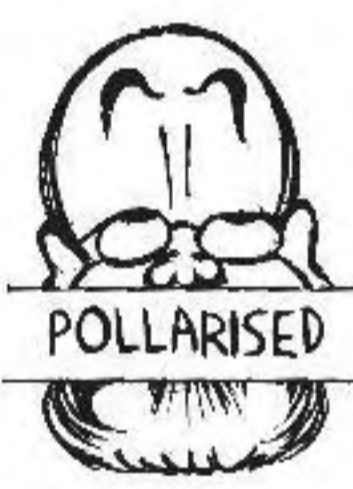
The CEO office had made multiple attempts through radio

jingles, advertisements on Delhi Metro and DTC buses, cultural programmes, among other things, to encourage citizens to vote, though the effort does not seem to have yielded the desired result.

Delhi CEO Ranbir Singh said many reasons could be attributed to the relatively lower percentage, but maintained that the voter turnout was good. "For a metropolitan city, voting

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



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DELHI ELECTION EXIT POLLS

	AAP	BJP	CONG
INDIA TODAY-AXIS MY INDIA	59-68	2-11	0
ABP NEWS-CVOTER	49-63	5-19	0-4
TIMES NOW-IPSOS	47	23	0
TV9 BHARATVARSH-CICERO	54	15	1
REPUBLIC-JAN KI BAAAT	48-61	9-21	0-1

Time ripe for law on compulsory mediation before litigation: CJI

ANANTHAKRISHNAN
 NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 8

UNDERLINING THE effectiveness of mediation to address commercial disputes, Chief Justice of India S A Bobde on Saturday said it is time to have a comprehensive law on making pre-litigation mediation mandatory.

"I think the time is ripe to devise a comprehensive legislation which contains compulsory pre-litigation mediation and a remedy for the biggest drawback in a mediation agreement, that is to say the unenforceability of an agreement arrived at a mediation, would ensure efficiency and also reduce the time pendency for parties as well as the courts," the CJI said.

Speaking at the Third International Conference organised by the Indian Council of Arbitration (ICA) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the CJI said:



'Will ensure efficiency, reduce pendency'

"Maybe if some method could be found for certifying that an agreement has been freely entered into and for making it executable like a degree, mediation could become the most effective ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanism)."

He said though arbitration is the most preferred mode of privately resolving a varied range of disputes today, "however it must be kept in mind that the same is at the cost of mediation and conciliation which is much faster and less expensive".

Tracing the history of ADR in India, he pointed out that it is not a recent phenomenon. "Arbitration and mediation are a deeply embedded dispute

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Pak govt considering passport exemption for Kartarpur pilgrims, takes Delhi by surprise

SHUBHAJIT ROY
 NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 8

IN A surprise for New Delhi, Pakistan's Interior Minister Ijaz Shah told Pakistan's parliament on Friday that Islamabad is considering allowing Indian pilgrims to the Kartarpur corridor without a passport in order to attract more visitors to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib.

According to a Pakistan English daily, *Express Tribune*,

Shah told the National Assembly that while at present, passport-free entry of Indian pilgrims to the Kartarpur corridor is not allowed, in accordance with a memorandum of understanding signed between Pakistan and India, a change in this was under consideration. Detailed inputs might be sought from the Foreign Affairs Ministry in this regard, he said.

"As per procedure, pilgrims can visit the corridor from dawn till dusk after producing Indian



The Gurdwara Darbar Sahib corridor opened last year

passport or overseas citizen of Indian-origin card along with the passport of the resident country," he said. The pilgrims are exempted from visas.

Sources in New Delhi, however, said they were not aware of any such proposal from Pakistan yet. "The major challenge is that Pakistan is charging \$20 fees, which we have asked be waived. That would help attract more visitors," a government source told *The Sunday Express*.

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WORLD



VIRUS CLAIMS FIRST FOREIGN CASUALTIES IN CHINA, TOLL AT 723
 PAGE 15

Supply from China hit, Govt takes stock of crucial drug ingredients

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
 MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 8

WITH THE novel coronavirus outbreak in China stalling import of crucial Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), the government has asked all state Food

and Drug Administrations (FDAs) to reach out to drug manufacturers and understand how much stock each has of 58 crucial APIs.

APIs are raw material used to make a pharmaceutical drug. India relies on China for 65-70 per cent of its annual API requirement. Stocks may last an-

other two months, several domestic drug manufacturers said.

The list of 58 APIs includes Lopinavir and Ritonavir, both used for HIV/AIDS treatment and

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15 MORE REACH
 KERALA PAGE 7

Rajapaksa keeps focus on terror, Modi says 'with an open mind'

SHUBHAJIT ROY
 NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 8

MORE THAN two months after India announced USD 50 million Line of Credit to Sri Lanka for security and counter-terrorism during President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's visit to India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and visiting Sri Lankan PM Mahinda Rajapaksa on Saturday underlined their common concerns regarding terrorism and the need to fight the problem "firmly".

Rajapaksa kept the focus on security and counter-terrorism issues in his remarks, while steering clear of the matter of reconciliation with Lankan Tamils, like Gotabaya did during his visit. President of Lanka from 2005 to 2015, Rajapaksa headed the country when the decades-long conflict with the LTTE was crushed.

But, in his remarks, Modi said they had talked "with an open mind" on the issue. "I am confident that the government of Sri Lanka will fulfill the expectations of the Tamil people for equality, justice, peace, and respect within a United Sri Lanka," he said.

The five-day visit to India is Rajapaksa's first bilateral visit overseas. Gotabaya too had chosen to come to India for his first

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In Himachal, a district helps women train as nurses: Ab beti aage badao

RAJESH CHANDER SHARMA
 UNA, FEBRUARY 8

HER MOTHER bedridden, father and brother dead, younger sister ailing, Ritu Rani could have given up. Instead, she chose a different route.

The 21-year-old from Raipur Marwari village in Una district of Himachal Pradesh walked up to Deputy Commissioner Sandeep

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Kumar's office and told him, "Job chahiye aur padhna hai (I need a job but I want to study too)." Impressed by Rani's gump-

tion, the DC visited her home next day and, soon, worked out a solution for Rani and eight other girls in similar situation as her. Now, the district administration has "adopted" the nine and has enrolled them for a three-year General Nursing Midwifery course, all expenses paid.

"Beti bachao, beti padhao. That's fine," says Kumar. "Now the next step should be, beti aage badao (take the daughter forward)."



Nine selected for General Nursing Midwifery course. Express

For the DC, charity begins at home. He has been sponsoring education of two girls personally. While one is doing a nursing course at Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh, the other is enrolled in a tourism and hospitality course at Phagwara in Punjab.

District Programme Officer (ICDS) Satnam Singh and his team says they drew up the list of nine girls on the basis of who needed help the most. "I went to

an educational institution and explained our intent. When I was returning, a girl came running up and narrated her story. It was so touching. I shortlisted her," Singh says.

Una-based Nanda Hospital is conducting the midwifery course, and owner Dr SK Nanda says it was his way of giving something back to society. "When the DC sahib approached me, I straightaway agreed to cut the fees by half. The remaining

half is being borne by the administration." Nanda said the hospital additionally gives a discount of 10% to 20% in fees to deserving candidates.

Among those selected for the course is Kanchan Chaudhary, 18, a resident of Nagonji village, who is being looked after by her grandparents after her father died and mother remarried. With her grandfather dependent on MNREGA wages and uncle a

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