

BY HOOK OR BY CROOK



PHOTOS: STAR FILE

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Ayem Janata, long time resident of Chaotica, capital of Wackoland, has woken up at the crack of dawn, feeling quite nervous. The capital's Mayoral Selections are about to commence and he is about to vote for a candidate backed by the opposition party, the QBNP (Queen Bee Nationalist Party). It's not that he is anti-government, he had voted for the current Supreme Leader (SL), at the National Selections, and since then, has doubted this decision only a few hundred times. His decision to vote for the QBNP candidate Dukhilal (toilet marka) is based solely on the fact that he was involved in only 50 cases of corruption and theft so there is hope for him yet.

Mr Janata dresses in his Friday best for the occasion. He must leave early as all transportation has been banned in the capital and therefore, he must travel on cow-back to get to his polling station which needless to say, will take a while. But he is adamant—he must vote, it is his right as a citizen in a democratic country to be able to have a say in who robs (scratch that!) runs it.

When he finally arrives at his destination, a government school, four hours later, he notices that the place is suspiciously deserted. He enters the school and approaches one of the presiding officers (The other one is on the floor, possibly asleep), with his Voter ID in hand. The officer, who is for some reason sporting a bloody lip and black eye looks at him shiftily, shuffles a few sheets of paper and curtly informs him that he has already cast his vote and cannot do so a second time. Mr Janata falls from the sky, he insists that this is not the case but to no avail. As an argument commences, three thuggish looking men (SL Minions) come out from a room inside and in a bizarre turn of events, ask him to step into another room to eat



biryani. But Mr Janata is not fooled easily, he remains adamant about remaining there till he is allowed to vote. So, a chase ensues during which he runs around the room with the thugs at his heels. A few excited journalists run in with their cameras to document this scene and are promptly "fed biriyani" by more thugs who have followed them inside.

A panicked Mr Janata runs to a second room where a few more thugs are sitting, with an enormous pile of ballots, marking them all with the *ram-da* (machete) marka seal of a candidate backed by the

Supreme Leader. Realisation dawns on Mr Janata and he is shocked by the betrayal of his beloved Premier. As a last resort, he tries to secure the help of some policemen stationed outside. The police however, are busy cheering on as the journalists are being force-fed "biryani", and have no interest in Mr Janata whatsoever.

Unable to accept defeat, Mr Janata proceeds to every polling station as fast as he possibly can on his cow, sometimes borrowing (read stealing) other people's ID's trying to cast his precious vote (he makes sure they supported *ram-da marka* first). Why should he play fair if no-one

else does? In a fateful turn of events, he is finally allowed to vote (using a woman's Voter ID), only to find out a few moments later, that his success was solely due to the fact that the rigging at this particular polling station was complete an hour before he got there.

Utterly defeated, Ayem Janata returns home and sits in front of the TV to make sense of this dreadful day, only to find the Chief Selection Commissioner's smiling face on every channel, delivering a flowery speech congratulating himself on the peaceful and fair selection that took place today. ■


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