

OUR OPINION, THEIR OPINION

"The goal of social justice and all round development can't be achieved through ideas but actions."
Mehiel Alber

FIGHTER JET QUEST GETS TACTICAL TURN

India's pursuit of fifth-generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) capability has received a vital push with the government opening the gates for private sector participation. This move marks a significant strategic departure from the past, where Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) held a virtual monopoly over military aircraft manufacturing. The shift not only acknowledges the limitations of a public sector-led defence effort but also embraces a more competitive, innovation-driven model aligned with modern aerospace trends. The decision is timely. India has lagged in deploying indigenous fifth-generation fighter aircrafts, even as adversaries like China have inducted advanced platforms like the J-20. The long-delayed Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) project may now see faster progress with private sector agility, technology tieups, and investment coming into play.

It opens doors for Indian majors like Tata and L&T to collaborate with global OEMs, enhancing capability while building an indigenous ecosystem. The move also reflects a maturing strategic culture where defence indigenisation is no longer seen through the prism of self-reliance alone but as a lever for technological excellence. A diversified aerospace sector can create high-skill jobs, boost R&D, and deepen India's strategic autonomy. Yet, challenges remain. Integrating private players into a highly sensitive and strategically guarded sector will require clear policy direction, transparency in procurement, and effective coordination between stakeholders.

Syrian freedom is dangerously incomplete

Syria's history of autocracy, repression and rule by one ethnic group, to the exclusion of others, is a history of failure. Its deeply flawed interim Constitution should be replaced with one that reflects the values of freedom, equality and self-governance

Syrians across the country celebrated the fall of the Assad regime in December as a moment of joy and freedom. Next, President Trump made the welcome decision to suspend economic sanctions against our country, a move that will help alleviate years of suffering. But for Syria's many diverse peoples — including mine, the Kurds in the northeast — this remains a time of risk and anxiety.

As a new Syria takes shape, we must ask: What kind of state will it be? Democratic or autocratic? Rights-respecting or repressive? I believe the answer lies in my region, where we have created what we consider to be a model of multiethnic direct democracy.

Syria's new interim Constitution doesn't reflect this diversity. It doesn't fully protect the rights of Syria's minorities or women, and it declares that Islamic law is the source of all national law in a highly centralised state. This is a dangerous development. Syria's history of autocracy, repression and rule by one ethnic group, to the exclusion of others, is a history of failure. We need a new constitutional process to produce a document that guarantees power sharing, safeguards political freedoms, decentralises governance and allows for full democratic participation, regardless of religion, ethnicity or gender.

This very democratic model was born in the early days of the Syrian revolution, when my region, which we formally call the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, achieved autonomy in 2012. Also known by its Kurdish name, Rojava, the area makes up nearly one-third of Syria and is home to almost two million Kurds. But like the rest of Syria, it is also home to Arabs, Alawites, Armenians, Druse, Chechens and other ethnic groups. It includes many religions, with Shia and Sunni Muslims, Yazidis and a diverse range of Assyrian, Syriac, Chaldean and other ancient Christian traditions, as well as secularists.

Under our administration, ethnic groups are legally protected, and women are given a leading role in policymaking and society. In a part

of the world with a history of autocracy and repression, we believe our system could serve as a model not only for Syria but also for the entire Middle East.

Different communities have a say in our government through a power-sharing arrangement in which every administrative position — from local mayoralties to the executive council of the entire region — is jointly held by a man and a woman of different ethnicities. Citizens meet in assemblies to govern their neighbourhoods, villages and towns and send delegates to regional councils. Local committees help shape policy on health, education, defence, sports, women's rights and more.

Our regional Constitution, which we call a social contract, guarantees equal rights for all. The system is not perfect. Despite our efforts at redistributing land once held by the Assad regime, there is still too much economic inequality. We suffer from antiquated infrastructure, serious environmental problems and a dearth of economic investment — all exacerbated by more than 12 years of war. We must work harder to get more people involved and to carry out our commitment to ecological awareness. But democracy is something that takes practice.

Our commitment to democracy and women's rights gave us the strength to fight the Islamic State, which we have defeated, with American military support, thanks to 14,000 of our young men and women who gave their lives in battle.

What can other countries learn from our system? Arabic was once the only official language in Syria; we teach students in three official languages: Arabic, Kurdish and Syriac. We have an independent, free, robust media that is protected in our social contract. We employ a restorative justice system that includes the Mala Jin (women's houses), where families can work out domestic problems with the advice and help of female elders. We encourage the full expression of ethnic culture, religion and dress. We don't demand that women wear their clothes in a certain way. Women hold half of legislative seats and government jobs

and take leadership positions in all institutions — military, political, economic and social.

Our experience provides valuable lessons for Syria's political future. Centralised control, instituted by the French authorities who once dominated Syria, has been a disaster, as it has for so many similarly diverse countries in the Middle East. The postcolonial legacy has failed the Middle East time and time again. It makes much more sense to allow regions to govern themselves according to their own needs and traditions within a unified nation.

We signed an agreement with Damascus in March stating our intention to integrate our institutions and armed forces into the new administration, and the interim president, Ahmed al-Shara, in turn, agreed to the right to representation of all Syrians in the new government, a ceasefire on all Syrian territory and a promise that all displaced Syrians would be able to return to their towns and villages.

But the interim Constitution al-Shara signed, with elections scheduled in five years, threatens to undermine these good intentions. Largely created by those involved in al-Shara's former rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, it allows for the curtailing of civil rights, including religious rights, if they are deemed to infringe on public order. There are inadequate checks and balances on the executive, who is given supreme power to appoint judges and one-third of the legislature.

Fault lines in the country since Assad's fall are already beginning to show. The terrible violence on Syria's coast in March, in which more than 1,600 civilians were killed, mostly Alawites, and more recent aggression against the Druse community south of Damascus underline the need for a new democratic constitutional process.

The new Syria must, from the outset, include everyone. The Trump administration and US Congress have a historic opportunity to help us build such a government in Syria. It would not only help Syrians but also provide a blueprint for the entire Middle East.

BY-ILHAM AHMED

Stateless individuals: A grave human rights crisis today

Statelessness does not serve as a mere legal predicament but rather emerges as a grave human rights crisis of our time, characterized by the absence of nationality, identity, and rights. Millions globally live without legal recognition, which denies them access to education, healthcare, employment, and even the fundamental right to belong to a nation. It exacerbates social and economic disparities, casting many into profound marginalization. In certain instances, those without nationality endure persecution, compelled displacement, and extended confinement, all owing to their absence of legal acknowledgment. A stateless individual, as defined under international law, is not recognized as a national by any state. The absence of legal recognition denies people's fundamental rights, hindering their access to critical services such as education, healthcare, work, and political participation. The legal status and rights of stateless people vary across different jurisdictions, although the lack of nationality often results in institutional discrimination and social marginalization.

In the 21st century, statelessness persists as a critical worldwide concern, frequently exacerbated by discriminatory nationality legislation, capricious citizenship revocation, and widespread relocation. A notable example is the Rohingya situation in Myanmar, where the 1982 Citizenship Law omitted the Rohingyas from the list of recognized ethnic groups, leaving them stateless. Palestinian refugees continue to experience legal

and political uncertainty, as the absence of international acknowledgment of Palestinian sovereignty has rendered them stateless for years. Various populations, such as the Bidoon in Kuwait and the Roma in Europe, persistently encounter structural impediments to obtaining nationality, frequently attributable to bureaucratic hurdles, absence of birth registration, and entrenched prejudice. Numerous children acquire their parents' statelessness because of restrictive nationality regulations, trapping them in a cycle of exclusion. In several nations, these regulations are profoundly discriminatory, especially against women, who frequently lack the privilege to bestow their nationality upon their offspring. Until recent reforms, Malaysian women were unable to confer their nationality to children born overseas, resulting in statelessness and a lack of legal protection for those children.

The rise of nationalism and the contemporary state system in the 19th and 20th centuries significantly influenced the legal concept of nationality. As nation-states established their borders, citizenship regulations grew increasingly institutionalized, often marginalizing ethnic and religious minorities. The early 20th century witnessed the demise of multi-ethnic empires, such as the Ottoman Empire, resulting in several populations being stateless, as newly established governments denied nationality to those deemed foreigners. Likewise, the denationalization of minority groups during the interwar period

resulted in extensive statelessness, especially among Jewish populations in Europe, leaving them exposed to legal safeguards and rendering them vulnerable to persecution.

The consequences of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles (1919) significantly transformed national boundaries throughout Europe, resulting in widespread statelessness. The 1917 Russian Revolution exacerbated the situation since the newly formed Soviet government declined to acknowledge former Russian imperial citizens residing outside. In response, the League of Nations established the Nansen passport, a travel permit for stateless refugees, providing temporary assistance without conferring nationality. Numerous nations declined to acknowledge Nansen passport holders as legitimate citizens, resulting in uncertainty and isolation. Consequently, statelessness is not a temporary phenomenon; it has endured throughout history, shaped by political instability, legal constraints, and pervasive prejudice. Citizenship as a legal status is a comparatively modern idea. For ages, fluctuating territorial boundaries, colonial governance, wars, and stringent nationality rules have resulted in widespread relocation and legal exclusion, rendering many individuals without a recognized identity.

We will analyze the legal frameworks addressing statelessness, including the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. These treaties

delineate the rights of stateless individuals and put duties on nations to prevent and mitigate statelessness. The 1954 Convention provided a clear legal definition of statelessness and outlined the rights of stateless persons, while the 1961 Convention aimed to prevent new cases of statelessness by introducing birthright nationality and pathways to naturalization. Although these conventions set a strong legal foundation, their effectiveness has been undermined by weak enforcement. Article 15 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) asserts that "everyone has the right to a nationality" and that "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their nationality." The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966 also acknowledges the right to legal identification and non-discrimination, obligating states to guarantee equal protection under the law. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has measures to avoid childhood statelessness, including Article 7 and Article 8, which underscore the right to birth registration and nationality from birth. The UNHCR initiated the campaign in 2014 intending to eradicate statelessness by 2024. Despite advances in particular areas, issues persist. Regional legal frameworks have influenced the approaches to statelessness in various regions globally.

International courts have played a crucial role in ensuring legal safeguards for stateless individuals. In *Hoti v. Croatia*, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) determined

that Croatia infringed upon the rights of a stateless individual by neglecting to formalize his legal status, notwithstanding his prolonged residency in the nation. In *Al-Jedda v. UK*, the UK Supreme Court determined that an individual cannot be stateless solely based on the theoretical possibility of applying for another nationality, confirming that governments cannot capriciously revoke citizenship from individuals. These instances illustrate the significance of judicial scrutiny in preventing nations from using legal gaps to deny individuals their nationality.

While legal structures are established to safeguard against statelessness, their efficacy is contingent upon the commitment of governments to enforce them. Numerous nations persist in using nationality rules as instruments of exclusion, systematically denying citizenship to ethnic minorities, refugees, and political adversaries. Even when legal avenues to nationality are available, bureaucratic impediments such as exorbitant application costs, onerous documentation demands, and protracted processing durations render it practically unfeasible for stateless people to secure legal recognition. Statelessness is a consequence of human-imposed policies, and the obligation to address it rests on governments and the international legal community. We must bridge international legal obligations with national implementation. Many nations have ratified treaties of 1954 and 1964 but have not implemented them, although many nations have not ratified them. Enforcing statutory rights requires judicial scrutiny, independent monitoring, and government accountability. Courts are crucial to complying with the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and protecting stateless people.

By-Nehaluddin Ahmad

Needed a sequel to Sanya Malhotra's film Mrs. it is the need of the hour

Every good movie on Netflix has a sequel. Every good Hollywood Movie has a sequel and nowadays even a good or bad Bollywood movie has a sequel. I can name a few. There was Tiger and then Tiger Zinda Hai, there was Singham and others followed and there was the Rocky series of Sylvester Stallone and so on and so forth. We have heard that there is a Gladiator II and very soon an Equalizer 4 and a John Wick 5 could be around the corner. We are still looking forward to another Karate Kid and another Rocky movie too after the outstanding success of Cobra Kai.

The film Mrs. is a superhit and Kanwaljit and Sanya need to be felicitated for their outstanding performance of the 1990s patriarchal family. Just watching the old man in the movie got my blood pressure up, I wonder what it would have done to a woman who saw the movie and is still to get married. Will it turn her off marriage forever? Why is it that so many men in the west today are not wanting to get married and is this problem coming to India too where people prefer live-in relationships in big cities of India like Mumbai and Delhi, which set the bar and trend for Indian society?

Men are increasingly opting for not getting married in the west today. The same is happening in Mumbai. What men fear most in the west today is not marriage and not monogamy. They fear homelessness and financial insecurity which could come as a result of a divorce. When a divorce takes place, a man has to part with a lot of money and may even lose his house in which the woman he is married to may not have even invested a penny. In most European and North American countries, they call this equalization of assets and all the assets belonging to both parties can be sold and equally divided between the two of them. In some cases, if the woman has more assets she can lose a substantial amount. Thus men prefer not to get married. So the very laws meant to protect women are today working against them as society adapts to come up with solutions to a problem that the judiciary and legislature are unwilling to address. Also to be very frank even the mainstream media is not willing to address. The only system that can actually change things -- the system of education in the country which should focus on producing better human beings and not just toppers and competition success candidates who have only money as their prime objective in mind -- is also unwilling to make changes in its curriculum to create gender sensitization and equality in the nation and promote good moral character. All that is needed is one class in which boys and girls are taught how to cook basic food, eat it and wash their own dishes. Even that is beyond our system of education. Because parents will not link it to success in life by bagging a high-paying job.

Newspapers run by big corporate houses are more like soap today and focus only on Profit and Loss and not on what society needs. So, they will not rake up or raise inconvenient issues, they will prefer to raise issues that are convenient and trending and those that will get great hits and applause. So, they have all applauded the movie Mrs. For all the wrong reasons. Mrs. is a movie that addresses issues that prevailed more in the 1990s and not in the year 2025. Who will address these issues? It is here that we need a sequel to the movie Mrs. and Sanya should be the lead character in the movie. The movie should focus on how Sanya or Richa gets her divorce. And a new character needs to be introduced as well a big city girl who is also undergoing a divorce. The manner in which the two ladies get a divorce should be shown too. While Richa should opt for a divorce on mutual grounds and not be bothered about maintenance or compensation or what have you, the other lady should be shown as one lodging a fake dowry harassment case, a fake domestic violence case and threatening to send her in-laws to jail.

Here the way the two cases spill out should also be shown. Richa who has to face criticism and scorn from society for opting for a divorce and even is accused of being immoral and loses her dance teacher job in a school as she will be a bad impression on children gets her divorce super quick and easy and eventually finds a friend and a man who understands her and things get better for her. She gets married again. Then we come to Richa the second or whatever her name is. She gets a hefty compensation or Rs 3 crore as maintenance from her former husband and his family. Her mother steals all the jewelry that was given to her in the wedding and keeps it. She gets a divorce super quick too as her in-laws want to end the matter as quickly as possible. She also finds another man with a rich corporate job and lots of money while parking her BMW or Mercedes in the local Golf Club. She gets married too and enjoys life again as she soon files for another divorce. The cops are brought in again. The question for our lawmakers is are our divorce laws messed up and is marriage a criminal offence. Should we therefore legalize prenuptial contracts? The next film could address all these issues and become a classic like Gone with the wind?

BY-AJIT CHAK