

Mainstream

Price: Rs 15

Founded by Nikhil Chakravartty

VOL LV No 40

New Delhi

to satellites, missile defence systems to cyber warfare, Israel is leading the world. The most important thing is that Israel has developed in its arms trade 'new weapons' and retrofitted 'old ones' so that they remain effective, relevant and deadly on a constantly changing battlefield. Israel remains a top end arms exporter with weapons alone constituting about 10 per cent of its overall exports. It invests about 4.5 per cent of its GDP on research and development (R & D), 30 per cent of which goes to the military. A country of only eight million people and without natural resources, Israel has the third largest number of companies after the US and China. Israel is, as the authors conclude, a 'disruptive innovator' and a laboratory for the rest of the world.

It is this failure of innovation that India mourns in its MIC, characterised by regressive growth. This is rather unfortunate since India

spends a huge money on arms imports, due to domestic MIC's inability to meet quantitative and qualitative requirements. A failed MIC is not only embarrassing but also robs the country of 'strategic autonomy' and constrains its performance as a regional security actor.

India has an opportunity to fix its problems since military modernisation is quite in vogue all over Asia along with reforms in domestic MIC. The focus is on creating a twentyfirst century defence industry and defence economy characterised by overarching target of self sufficiency. India's military catch-up and leapfrogging is possible only through engineering the right kind of model and dovetailing the same in Indian circumstances. While many laudable initiatives have been taken in the last couple of years, more needs to be done to pull India's MIC in the right direction. ■

WOMEN'S WORLD

The 'Madam' as Defence Minister

GARIMA MANI TRIPATHI

Men define women not as 'herself' but 'relative to them,' wrote Simone De Beauvoir in *Second Sex* (1949). While Ms Nirmala Puri's appointment as the first (full-time) woman Defence Minister is a welcome step, the patriarchal perspective identified by Beauvoir pervades Indian society where nationalism, race, border etc. are all part of the grand masculine narrative of subjugation, dominance and power. No wonder, the 'hegemonic masculinity' was evident in examples like jokes that went viral on social media poo-hooing her appointment as the Defence Minister.

Paul Sartre talked of human beings endowed with existential freedom wherein they come 'being for itself (*pour-soi*)'. However, Sartre thinks that the aforesaid transcendental freedom has eluded womanhood in most social systems where they are doomed in imminence to remain 'being in itself (*en-soi*)', with the sole exception of some Scandinavian countries where women enjoy equal privileges and participation in political life. In India, women continue to live under subjugation. They are under-

represented in government and corporate jobs and the position is no better in the unorganised sector. In fact, the percentage of female workforce has slid in India from 42.6 in 1993-94 to 27.4 in 2015-16. Even Nepal and Bangladesh are miles ahead of us. The political arena is an extension of this anomaly despite the so-called 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution.

When Indira Gandhi reached the political pyramid, it had less to do with her gender and more to her dynastic lineage. Women in general have struggled in India for a reasonable participation in the political process and some of them neutralised their feminine outlook to stay relevant in the political arena. Very few women in Indian politics could benefit from their 'acquired' feminine outlook. From this perspective, her appointment could be the BJP's propensity to adopt the umbrella politics of the Congress to pander to the intellectual class Dalits, Muslims, women etc. where they make an endeavour to reach the wider classes of citizens outside their domain.