

Daily Excelsior Oct 5, 1996

Butter Vs Guns

Sir,

Col BK Sharma deserves to be lauded for his well analysed and thought provoking article on “shortages of officers in the Army” (Sep 28). It is, however, not only the shortage of officers in the Army that should be a matter of concern for us. There have been enough indications to show that the state of equipment and the weaponry of our armed forces is also far from satisfactory. In fact, considering the general neglect in our defence preparedness, one might even feel that the pre-1962 days are back again as far as the armed forces are concerned. No country has been caught napping twice and it would be a matter of great shame if the 1962 history is allowed to repeat itself.

We are perhaps the only country in the World that has fought five wars, (including the proxy war in Kashmir that we are presently engaged in), over a span of less than 50 years since Independence. This fact in itself should have been experience enough for any Indian Government to realise the inevitability of wars even if one side (like India) is determined against it. Evidently, therefore, it is not ignorance in military matters that is causing this apparent neglect on the part of Government. It could partly be the result of our leaders being too pre-occupied with political manipulations for meeting the immediate threat to their existence, to think of any future threat of war that, hopefully, may not materialise – not at least while the are in power. But it appears, mainly, to be the result of the usual controversy on the “butter vs guns” that generally raises its head during peacetime. It is not to say that the government should not strive to provide the maximum amount of “butter” to its people, but that the “guns” are also needed to be able to eat the “butter”, however little one may have, with dignity and honour. A self-respecting nation ought to plug all sources of waste and misappropriation of its wealth for generating more “butter” before beginning to cut on the “guns”.

Dr K. Brahma Singh