

The Times of India Sep 27, 1996

Lean and Mean

Sir,

Your expression of concern over the shortfall of officers and men in the country's armed forces and the unsatisfactory state of their preparedness for war in the editorial 'Fading Lustre' (September 4) is both genuine and timely. Considering the existing state of affairs, 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, indeed, 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 still engaged in) over a span of less than 50 years since Independence. This fact, in itself, should have been experience enough for any government to realise the inevitability of wars even if one side (like India) is determined against it. A slimmer and smarter army is no doubt a feasible alternative. However, it has to be remembered that in order that a smaller army may not compromise on its operational obligations, it will have to be provided with greater mobility and armed with much more sophisticated weaponry and this may turn out to be costlier than having greater manpower.

**K BRAHMA SINGH
JAMMU**