



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Looking back at the history of the Indian Air Force (IAF) one would come across two significant, even if small, events. One was the evolution of close air support which evolved in 1936 while No1 Squadron, the only one at that time constituting the Air Force, operated against the tribal rebellion. This was to set the thinking and pace of the concept of support to the ground forces and was refined with the passage of decades of advances in technology and growth of the Air Force. The second was the first operational sortie in World War II when then Squadron Leader K.K. "Jumbo" Majumdar commanding No 1 Squadron, took off from Tongou (in Eastern Burma) in an obsolete Lysander reconnaissance aircraft locally modified by the Indian airmen to carry two 250 lb bombs and bombed the Japanese Air Force base at Mae-Haungsaun on February 2, 1942, causing extensive damage, without any loss of life. This first bombing sortie became the first counter-air mission in a regular war against the powerful Japanese Air Force. This, in turn, generated the belief in counter-air power and the concept of air superiority although the IAF aircraft were ill suited for this role in those days.

By a curious set of circumstances, last year the Centre organised an international seminar titled "Air Dominance" on February 2-3, to commemorate the day Jumbo bombed the Japanese in 1942. This year, we held the second of this series on February 2-3, under the title "Future of Air Power." We were fortunate that Shri Nanda of Avi Oil provided us with

a speech of Jumbo Majumdar recorded a few days before his fatal crash in 1945. This is reproduced as the opening article in this volume. We are glad that late Wing Commander Majumdar's son, "Bemby" flew down from the UK to attend the seminar. Jumbo's historic bombing of the Japanese air base was a long time ago and would appear to be a small step. But as the Chinese proverb says, "A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step." Jumbo's single step has now led the IAF to adopt the doctrine of air dominance.

Air dominance, both air-to-air and air-to-surface, points to the direction aerospace power would take in the coming years because of technological advances in a variety of areas that can be synergised to produce effect-based, long-range precision strikes, altering the very way war would be fought in the future. The air force that can synergise its weapons and equipment to this doctrine would inevitably have a strategic superiority not only against the opposing air force but also the adversary's ground forces and naval power.