



## EDITOR'S NOTE

**T**his issue practically marks the completion of 74 years of the Indian Air Force (IAF). Aviation in India, of course, goes much further back. Delving into history of a century of air power, one finds that there are very few air forces in the world that can claim the proud privilege of 74 years of an unbroken record of independent existence and performance in war and peace. At times like these, it is inevitable that we would tend to recall snippets from our history.

As we were going to Press, we were also conducting one of our outreach seminars, this one at the Indian Air Force base at Kalaikunda on behalf of HQ Eastern Air Command. This was one of the dozens of air bases that were constructed during World War II across the length and breadth of India from where three air forces—the Indian Air Force, the British Royal Air Force and the US Army Air Force (it was not yet an independent air force)—operated. Kalaikunda was rebuilt in the 1950s, and hosted the first of the Mystere aircraft in No. 1 Squadron, with the base commanded by (then group captain, later air marshal) Maurice Barker, who, as a young flying officer, first located the Japanese aircraft carrier-led fleet sailing up the Bay of Bengal and occasionally bombing cities on the east coast two months after Pearl Harbour—a sortie that Winston Churchill was to describe as the turning point of the War. Incidentally, the first land-based strategic bombing attack on Japan was carried out from one such air base to the west of Kalaikunda; but that has a story of its own involving one of our most illustrious former air chiefs! Kalaikunda, like most other air bases, used to have two satellite airfields linked by miles and miles of taxi tracks.

But Kalaikunda has another historical background. After the Sino-Indian War of 1962, when we were so deficient of air defence capability, a joint air

"Exercise Shiksha" (the word meaning "teaching") was held here in 1963, with the Royal Air Force bringing down some of their best aircraft and crews. Kalaikunda has now been host to the USAF-IAF air exercise titled "Cope India 05" last year. And the cover photograph is one of the mementos of that event, with the photograph taken from an IAF helicopter.