

283. On the 28th December long distance reconnaissance patrols reported Japanese troops at Lumut and at Sitiawan. At the latter place repairs were being carried out to the air landing strip. On the 31st December, air reconnaissance reported small steamers with barges in tow moving down the Perak coast. At 0900 hrs., 1st January, a motor launch patrol located a tug with four barges in tow stationary at the mouth of the River Perak. It was clear that the tug was stuck on a sandbank. Naval and Air action were requested, but the Japanese air cover proved too strong and nothing could be effected.

284. On the afternoon of the 1st January six small steamers accompanied by other craft were reported anchored at the mouth of the River Bernam, which flows into the sea a few miles south of the River Perak. The River Bernam is navigable for launches to Rantau Panjang, whence tracks lead to the main road, so that the threat to our communications was obvious. At 1930 hrs. some enemy troops landed at Ulan Melintang on the River Bernam. To meet this threat the 12 Brigade Group was moved from its rest area at Bidor to the Changkat Jong area.

285. At dawn on the 2nd January an enemy force, strength about one battalion, landed at Telok Anson. It had come down the river Perak in boats. The instructions given to the 1 Independent Company and the Squadron 3 Cavalry were to the effect that they were to delay any landing and cover the occupation of the Changkat Jong position. Accordingly, after some fighting in the outskirts of the town, these troops withdrew and passed through the 12 Brigade Group. The enemy followed up closely and by 1400 hrs. were in contact with the forward troops of this brigade which fell back fighting. By the evening the Commander 12 Brigade Group estimated that he was being attacked by at least a regiment and reported that he could not guarantee to keep the main road open for more than 24 hours. It was as a result of this report that the withdrawal from Kampar was ordered.

286. On the 3rd January the enemy again attacked strongly in the Changkat Jong area supported by their Air Force but were repulsed. In the evening the 12 Brigade Group withdrew to the Trolak sector of the Slim position. The 6/15 Brigade Group followed them to a covering position at Sungkai. The 28 Brigade Group moved to the Slim River Village area.

287. South of Perak the Commander of the L. of C. Area (Brigadier Moir) was responsible for the defence of the west coast. He came directly under the orders of the Commander 3 Indian Corps. Immediately the threat to the west coast developed the forces at his disposal were strengthened by the temporary transfer of an infantry battalion from the 9 Indian Division and of another infantry battalion, the 3 Cavalry and some artillery from the 11 Indian Division which was later itself reinforced by another battalion drawn from the 9 Indian Division.

288. Late on the 2nd January two small steamers and about a dozen motor landing craft or barges approached the coast at Kuala Selangor a small village a little south of the

Perak frontier. One of the steamers was sunk by artillery fire and the remainder withdrew. On the afternoon of the 3rd January a number of small craft were sighted off Kuala Selangor but out of artillery range. About midday on the 4th, however, patrols of 3 Indian Cavalry made contact with an enemy force moving south down the road from 8th Mile Village north of Kuala Selangor. This enemy force, driving back the cavalry patrols, advanced eastwards along the River Selangor, exercising a direct threat to the main road communications at Rawang. A sharp engagement took place at the bridge east of Batang Berjuntai. To meet this threat the 6/15 Brigade Group, recently withdrawn from the Kampar position, was moved to Rawang and thence to the Batang Berjuntai area which it reached on the 6th January. It took up a defensive position south of the River Selangor. Orders were given for the Denial Scheme to be put into force at the Batu Arang coal mines—the only coal mines in Malaya—which are situated in this district.

One destroyer (H.M.S. "Scout") and naval patrol craft operated against enemy craft off the west coast.

289. *Reinforcements.*—On the 3rd January the 45 Indian Infantry Brigade with attached troops arrived at Singapore. This was a comparatively newly formed brigade which was only semi-trained. It had been intended for operations in the Middle East and had had no experience of jungle warfare. It was commanded by Brigadier Duncan. It was accompanied by an Indian Pioneer battalion—a non-combatant labour unit. On disembarkation the Brigade and the Pioneer battalion concentrated in the Segamat-Malacca area.

290. *Plans for the Defence of Johore.*—On the 4th January the Commander A.I.F. informed me that, if 3 Indian Corps fell back to Johore, he would like to be allowed to exercise operational control over all troops in Johore. If this was impossible, then he would prefer that the A.I.F. should be responsible for the West area and the 3 Indian Corps for the East area.

I replied that I could not agree to this for the following reasons:—

(a) The fusion of the 3 Indian Corps and A.I.F. must lead to Command and Administrative difficulties.

(b) The proposal to transfer the A.I.F. as a whole from East to West Johore was not practical owing to the complicated moves that would become necessary in the middle of active operations and the weakening of the east coast defences.

I informed him that the only practical solution at that time seemed to be for the A.I.F. to be responsible for the East area and the 3 Indian Corps for the West area, but that I would be guided by events.

291. At 1100 hrs. 5th January I held a conference at Segamat in North Johore as previously arranged (see Section XXXI) to discuss plans for the withdrawal and the defence of Johore. It was attended by the Commanders 3 Indian Corps and A.I.F. with members of their staffs and by staff officers of Headquarters Malaya Command.