

able administrative planning and coordination by my Headquarters. Not only were nearly all the branches of the Army administrative services affected but also the R.A.F. to a very large extent. Unfortunately the work done on this base was of little or no use for my current operations or their development; on the contrary, it involved a diversion of constructional effort that I could very ill afford to spare.

337. I have mentioned above the employment of the smaller Arakan ports such as Cox's Bazaar and Maungdaw. As might be expected, these came into their maximum use in December when 15 Indian Corps' offensive was launched. Two jetties had been completed at Cox's Bazaar during the previous month and the remaining two at this period. During December, imports at Cox's Bazaar, including Ultakhali, amounted to 30,000 tons and at Maungdaw to 20,000 tons. After the capture and development of Akyab and Kyaukpyu in January, the traffic at these ports declined. Maungdaw was closed on the 31st March while Cox's Bazaar continued to operate on a reduced scale; the jetties at Ultakhali were destroyed by fire in April.

338. The early stages of 15 Indian Corps' offensive saw two interesting and important developments in maintenance by I.W.T., which have already been mentioned in Part I. The most spectacular feat was the transportation over the Maungdaw—Buthidaung hill road of the 650 craft required for the maintenance of 53 Brigade (25 Indian Division) in its advance down the Kalapanzin Valley. The most careful calculation and loading were required to enable the vehicles carrying these boats, which were of varied types, to negotiate not only the difficult mountain road but particularly the tunnels which were low, narrow and winding. The reassembling and launching of this fleet, at Buthidaung, was completed in the remarkably short space of five days; but this did not end the difficulties. The intricacies of navigation down the Kalapanzin, which in its lower reaches is really an arm of the sea, remained. The manner in which these navigational difficulties were overcome by the Inland Water Transport service and infantry, with the aid of the Royal Navy, deserves the highest praise.

Meanwhile, further east on the Kaladan River, 81 (West African) Division, which was on air supply, had developed flotillas of local craft for the local movement of supplies. These they operated themselves.

339. It will be remembered from Part I that the original operation planned for the capture of Akyab was to have been mounted from Chittagong. Owing, however, to the limited capacity of the port, maintenance had to be arranged direct from depots in India, and despatched from Calcutta. This resulted in loss of flexibility, so that when Akyab was captured by a river-crossing operation on the 3rd January, it was found that the shipping from Calcutta could not be made to arrive before the 20th January; even then it was loaded with stores, etc., planned for the original February assault. The landing on the Myebon Peninsula, which took place only nine days after the capture of Akyab, was mounted and maintained from that port. The export commitment inevitably delayed the stores build-up in the island, and, for a time, our resources

there were slender. Energetic action, however, overcame the emergency and the development of Akyab as an Advanced Base began; the build-up and maintenance being effected by sea from India.

The next major operation was the landing at Kyaukpyu on Ramree Island, which was mounted from Chittagong. The reasons for the air supply bases here and on Akyab Island have been dealt with in Part I. The development of the airfields and the air supply aspect will be dealt with in the next section. The port and Advanced Base development, however, was an essential part of the development of the Southern L. of C. This development began directly Akyab and Kyaukpyu were captured. To achieve the results required as quickly as possible, a Sub-Area was established early in February in each place to develop the advanced base, and over 20,000 construction and administrative troops were allotted to each Sub-Area.

340. Despite the fact that shipments were made direct from India to both Akyab and Kyaukpyu, their intensive development placed a very much heavier load on Chittagong. Imports of stores rose from 23,000 tons in January, 1945, to 60,000 in April, while bulk petrol imports increased from 38,000 tons during November, 1944, to 82,000 in April, 1945. Exports were contingent on forward requirements and were not limited by port capacity. Port working was satisfactory throughout the period. Further development of the Eastern Bengal Railway system was proceeding; important improvements being made to the railhead facilities and to the water supply scheme for railway operation, as well as extension of marshalling yards and loops, and the development of stations and sidings. In mid-March, my Headquarters assumed direct responsibility for the Chittagong area and ports, which had hitherto been under Headquarters L. of C. Command.

341. The only aspect which gave a certain amount of anxiety was in connection with railway traffic. Serious congestion began to arise at Chittagong in mid-February due to unbalanced arrivals by both sea and rail. This condition was made worse later in the month by the arrival of large quantities of Bailey bridging. In March an embargo had to be placed on all traffic *ex* India to Chittagong, until the position could be restored by relating and phasing despatches more closely to the releasing capacities of the depots. This was done during the latter half of March by improving railway working in the Chittagong district, and by the provision of more load-carrying motor transport in the depot area. Unfortunately congestion again occurred early in April, and forwardings, except in the case of priority items, had again to be restricted. A strong contributory factor which led to this state of affairs was the necessity, owing to the break-up of the airfield, for moving 42,000 tons of airfield construction stores from Chittagong to Pathangar, halfway between Chittagong and Comilla, in addition to the large normal supply traffic.

342. An interesting side-light on the Ramree operation deserves mention. It will be remembered that 26 Indian Division was