



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Kader Siddiqui

# THE TANGAIL LANDINGS

## A signal for victory

DR. NURAN NABI

I travelled to Tura, the capital of Meghalaya, three times during the war as a representative of Tangail Mukti Bahini to bring arms and ammunitions. Brigadier Sanat Singh was my contact and host. He arranged my meetings with Gen Gill and Brigadier Klair during my first and second visit in June and July, respectively. During my third visit, I had the honour to meet Lt. Gen. Aurora, the GOC of the Eastern Command of the Indian Army, at the office of Gen Gill in Tura on November 7th.

In the meeting, Gen Aurora indicated that Indian paratroopers could be dropped in Tangail by the end of November or early December. He asked me to return to Tangail as soon as possible and make arrangements to secure an area so that Indian paratroopers could land safely. He also disclosed that several officers of the Indian Army would come to the liberated zones in Tangail and stay with us. We would be responsible for their security.

At the end of the meeting, General Aurora warned me that under no circumstance, should I share this information with anyone other than Kader Siddiqui. He further mentioned that I was the first Bangladeshi person privy to the details of

this top secret military operation. He reminded me repeatedly of the importance of this message and asked me to comply accordingly.

As we shook hands to say goodbye, General Aurora mentioned, "This is the Liberation War of your motherland. I am certain you will be able to make good on your promise to your country. I hope to see you in Tangail."

I evaluated my meeting with Gen Aurora as a signal for our impending victory.

Accordingly, an Indian officer crossed the border and arrived in Tangail. He was perhaps the first Indian Army officer to infiltrate more than one hundred miles into the Bangladesh free zone before the war started. I met him on 3 December in Baroiotol, a village on the Dhaleshwari River near Bhuapur. He introduced himself as Peter and we exchanged passwords. I came to know that he was a Captain in the Indian Army and that he was a Bengali from Kolkata. He had arrived in the free zone just a night earlier, escorted by five freedom fighters, three of whom were trained wireless set operators. His mission was to contact Kader (Tiger) Siddiqui and select the strategic locations for the land-

ing of the Indian paratroopers. All relevant information was to be sent back to his controlling headquarter.

The next morning, Kader left to oversee the massive preparation for the impending attacks. On December 7, Peter and I left the boat and camped by the side of Nikrail School. Kader showed up in our camp. He formally put me in charge of communication regarding all subsequent attacks and placed one hundred fifty freedom fighters under my command. My job was to coordinate communication among the different companies, to maintain constant contact with Kader, and to help Peter in his work. Kader's presence and the news of India's recognition of Bangladesh created a feverish excitement amongst the people. After the evening prayers, thousands of people assembled at the school ground. Kader gave a passionate speech.

Captain Peter was deeply impressed by the large turnout, and the support and enthusiasm of the population. We left Nikrail to move towards Ghatail. We reached West of Ghatail by early morning on December 9 and set up a temporary camp at the house of Abdul Halim Chowdhury. With Madhupur captured, the road for the Indian Army to move from

Jamalpur to Tangail was clear and Captain Peter relayed this information to his command.

On the morning of December 10, Brigadier Kader Khan's troops, after their defeat at Jamalpur and Mymensingh, were fleeing towards Dhaka.

That afternoon (December 11), Peter received a coded message from his headquarters and burst into joy. He told me that the paratroopers would be landing shortly. I, then, sent a message to Kader which simply said, "They are coming," alerting the commanders of the area.

At five in the afternoon, two Indian Air Force MiGs flew very low over Ghatail and Kalihati.

We did not know which dropping area they would choose as the MiGs circled a very wide area. Then we saw the cargo planes, flying above the circling MiGs. Suddenly, the two MiGs shot up towards the stratosphere as the cargo planes slowly descended. They were Indian Air Force transport planes, AN-12, C-119, and CD-3. The planes descended in waves. As they approached their lowest point of descent, they came to a slow hover.