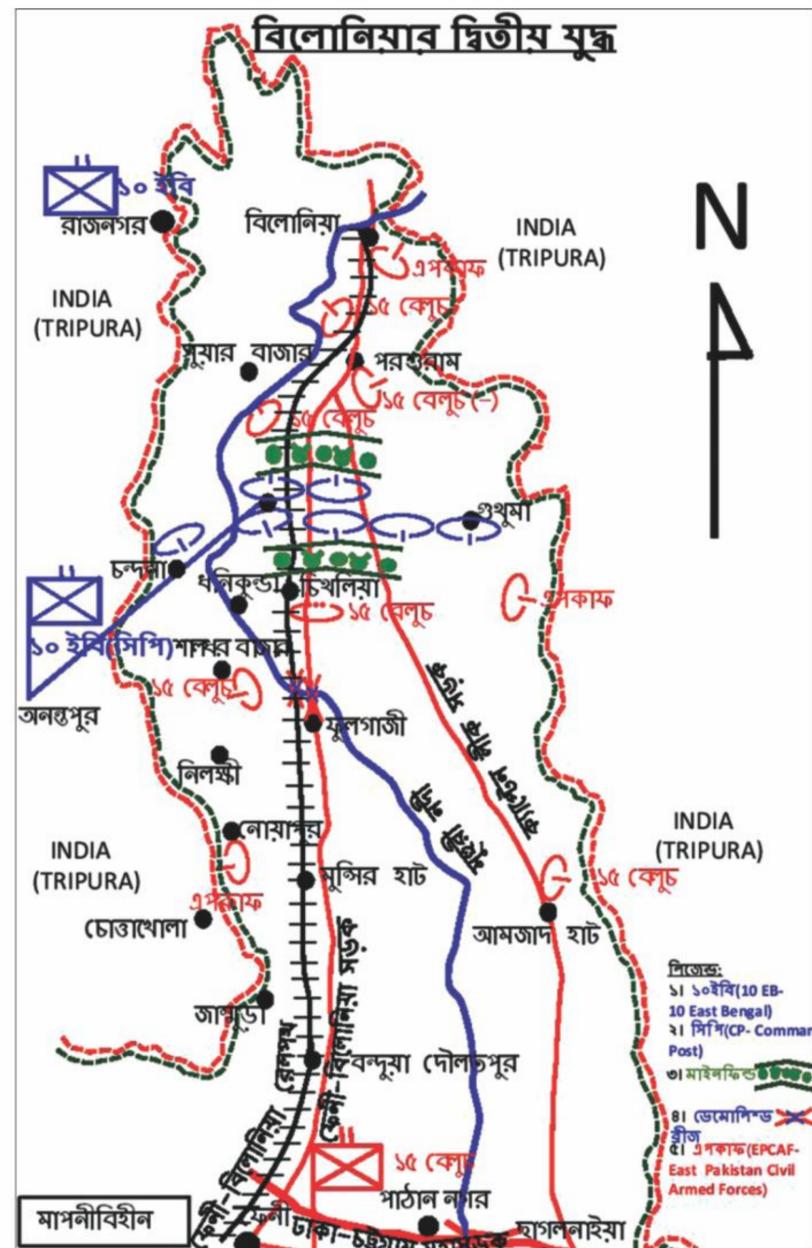
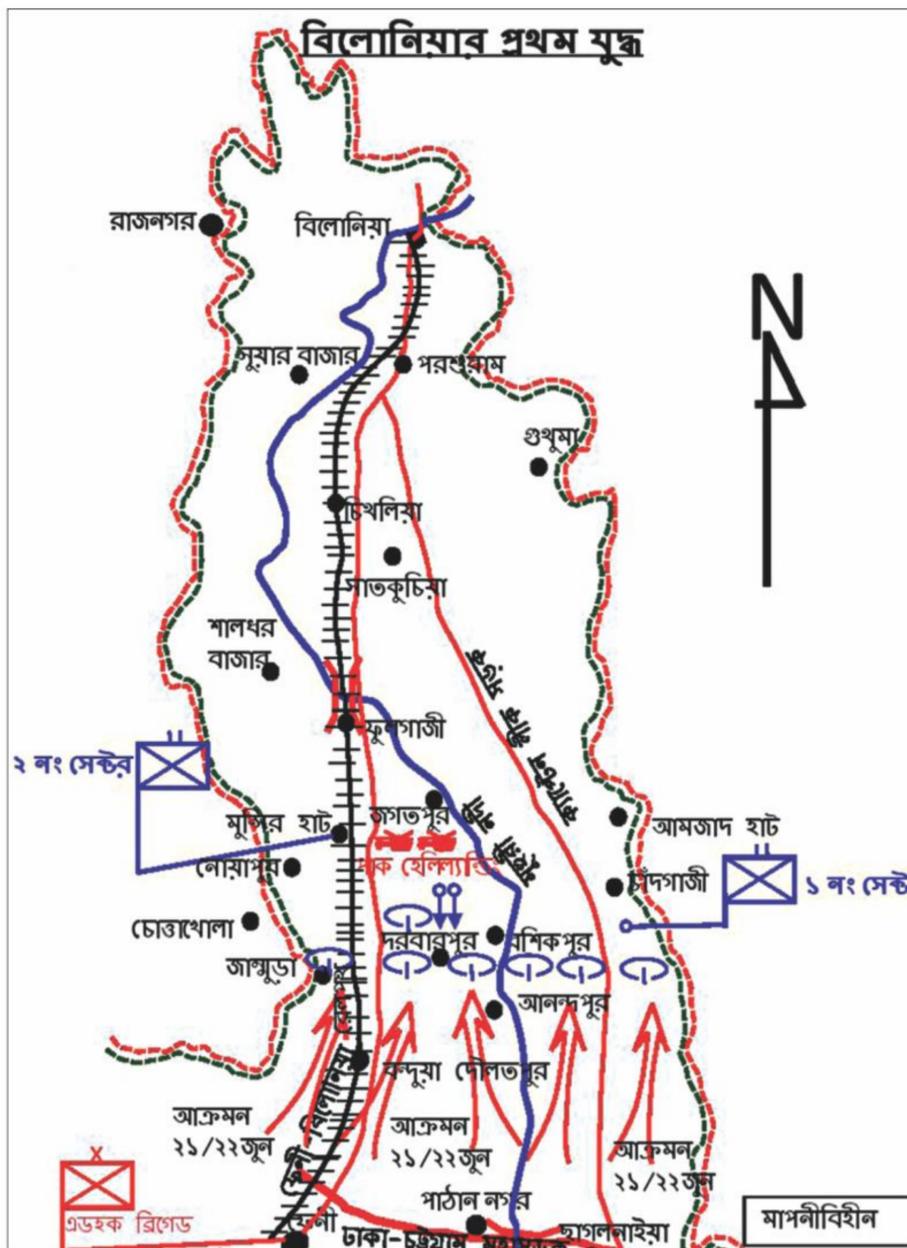


BATTLES OF BELONIA BULGE



Maps of first and second battles of Belonia

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Mines don't recognise friend or foe. So, the accomplishments are duly credited to the Pioneer Platoon freedom fighters for mine-laying, mine-lifting, demolition of bridges/culverts, mining on the roads used by the enemy forces, etc., as they did these risky tasks without any proper professional gadgets like mine detectors, prodders, etc.

In the second week of October, Sector Commander Lt. Col. Khaled Mosharraf, along with Maj. Gen. R.D. Hira, GOC of 23 Mountain Division of Indian army, visited battalion headquarters and defensive positions of 10 East Bengal Regiment. They also examined and evaluated enemy positions and their strength. Based on their personal survey and the intelligence reports, the Indian army constructed a sand model of the Feni-Belonia bulge by depicting the location of rail, road and river including enemy positions inside the bulge. After the detailed sand model discussion, Maj. Jafar Imam was instructed to infiltrate with his battalion inside enemy territory to encircle and attack them decisively. In order to strengthen the forces under Maj. Jafar Imam, Charlie Company of 2 East Bengal Regiment commanded by Capt. Golam Helal Morshed Khan was brought from Sector #3 of Lt. Col. K. M. Shafiullah and was placed under the command of Maj. Jafar Imam. A task force was created comprising of 10 East Bengal Regiment, Charlie Company of 2 East Bengal Regiment and the forces of Sector #1. Maj. Jafar Imam was selected as the task force

commander. While 23 Mountain Division of the Indian Army confirmed necessary artillery support, 2 Rajpoot, 3 Dogra and 8 Bihar Regiment of Indian Army were kept ready so that on call of the task force commander, they may act as per needs. But before the execution of this plan, Sector Commander Lt. Col. Khaled was severely wounded on his forehead on October 22, 1971 from enemy artillery shelling at Kamala Shagor near Koshba during an attack on the Pakistani position at Koshba Puran Bazar by 9 East Bengal Regiment under Capt. Mohammad Ainuddin.

In the early morning of October 27, Maj. Jafar Imam entered enemy territory along with the section, platoon and company commanders and conducted an extensive reconnaissance (recce) of the enemy positions. Members of the recce team were dressed like ordinary farmers and labourers, mingled with the local farmers, carried out the recce successfully without arousing any suspicion of the enemy and returned to the defence line safely.

November 5 was fixed as the D-day. It was a cold winter evening. And against the usual weather pattern, after sunset, it started raining heavily and the weather turned ghastly. Thus, nature presented a perfect opportunity for the successful infiltration. At 10:30pm, Bravo Company under the command of 2/Lt. Mizan silently crossed Muhuri river and slowly started the infiltration followed by Charlie Company under 2/Lt. Didar. After a few minutes' pause, Charlie Company of 2nd East Bengal Regiment infiltrated commanded by Capt. Helal Morshed. Alpha Company of

10 East Bengal Regiment commanded by Lt. Imam-uz-Zaman infiltrated thereafter followed by headquarter company under the direct command of Maj. Jafar Imam. Freedom fighters took defensive position covertly from west to east covering Chondona, Sholia and Guthuma and immediately started digging trenches and making bunkers facing both north and south. Maj. Jafar Imam established his command post at Anantapur. Likewise Capt. Mahfuz of Sector #1 crossed the Indian border from eastern side, built defence line up to Guthuma and established contact with Bravo Company of 10 East Bengal Regiment. Thus, the border from east to west was sealed off by the freedom fighters by encircling the enemy forces located at Parshuram and Belonia. Hectic preparation continued throughout the night for the imminent battle.

On November 6, early in the morning, a captain and five soldiers of Pakistan army were seen coming from Feni towards Parshuram/Belonia in a motor-driven railway trolley and reached in front of the defence line of freedom fighters. They were completely unaware of the presence of the guerilla force in their occupied territory. When the enemy trolley crossed the Chitholia railway station and reached within the firing range, Habilder Yar Ahmed of Bravo Company and his men opened heavy fire on them. As a result, all the enemy soldiers, including the captain, died and the trolley with all the arms and ammunition fell scattered. Habilder Yar Ahmed was overcome with joy and emotion. He got out of his bunker with

'Joy Bangla' slogan, rushed to the spot, picked up the rank badges and the revolver of the enemy captain and started running towards his bunker. But unfortunately when he had almost reached the bunker, Pakistani forces from surrounding areas were alerted and started firing sporadically. Habilder Yar Ahmed received a bullet in his left eye and was instantly martyred. It was the first casualty of the freedom fighters, whereas six enemy soldiers fell in the operation! Habilder Yar Ahmed was posthumously awarded the gallantry of 'Bir Bikram'.

After a while, a few enemy patrol and recce parties approached the defensive position of the freedom fighters to assess the situation but ran away due to fire from the defence line of the freedom fighters. After about an hour, our defences were attacked by the enemy forces simultaneously from both north and south. They were beaten back. During November 6-7, the enemy tried to break and penetrate our defence line from the south to rescue their forces under siege at the north, but all of their attempts resulted in utter failure with huge casualties. At about 2:30pm on November 7, four U.S.-made Pakistani Sabre Jets approached our defences and started strafing and bombing our positions. Their heavy machine gun and devastating rocket fire resulted in substantial casualties at our end. However, one of the enemy jets was struck with our heavy machine gun fire and was badly damaged giving out dark plumes of smoke while desperately trying to fly away.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14