

It's Sunday morning in the US, Sunday night in Bangladesh. Rakib asked why it took so long for me to return his call this morning. I explained that it was a beautiful morning and that I went to a restaurant (Penera Bread) for coffee and fresh bread. He said he understood my wish to enjoy the nice weather this morning. Rakib said that he knew that there was an American festival (Holiday) coming up at the end of the month, Thanksgiving. He asked about the tradition and its meaning. I told him it is a national holiday not a religious one, and how the early settlers in America has started the tradition to give thanks for a good harvest and all good things in their lives. He said some of his holidays had similar meaning. Rakib informed me that Eid-ul-azha, the second biggest festival of the year in Bangladesh will be held on 28 & 29 Nov. The translation is *festival of sacrifice*. Rakib explained that the festival is in honor of the profit Ibrahim (this name is believed to be derived from the Jewish name Abraham), who in obedience to God, sacrificed his son. I did a little research on the festival and found the following information:

*Four thousand years ago, the valley of Mecca a dry and uninhabited place. According to history, the Profit Ibrahim was instructed to bring his wife,(Hajar) and their child (Ismael) to Arabia from his home land. This was Gods command. As Ibrahim made ready to return to his home land, his wife asked him, "Who ordered you to leave us here"? When Ibrahim replied: "Allah"(God), Hajar said, "then Allah will not forget us; you can go". Although Ibrahim had left a large quantity of food and water with Hajar and Ismael, the supplies quickly ran out and within a few days the two were suffering from hunger and dehydration. According to the story, a desperate Hajar ran up and down between two hills called Safa and Marwa seven times, trying to find water. Finally, she collapsed beside her baby Ismael and prayed to Allah for deliverance. Ismael struck his foot on the ground, causing a spring of water to gush forth from the earth. Other accounts have the angel Jibral (Gabriel) striking the earth and causing the spring to flow. With this secure water supply, they were not only able to provide for their own needs, but were also able to trade water with passing nomads for food and supplies. When the Prophet Ibrahim returned fromhis home land to check on his family, he was amazed to see them running a profitable well. One of the main trials of Prophet Ibrahim's life was to face the command of Allah to devote his dearest possession, his only son. Upon hearing this command, he prepared to submit to Allah's's will. At the time of sacrifice, Ibrahim discovered a sheep died instead of Ismael. When Ibrahim was fully prepared to complete the sacrifice of his son, Allah revealed to him that his "sacrifice" had already been fulfilled. Ibrahim had shown that his love for his Lord superseded all others: that he would lay down his own life or the lives of those dear to him in order to submit to God. Muslims commemorate this superior act of sacrifice during Eid al-Adha by killing some of the families animals and shareing them with their family, friends and a large portion is given to the poor.*

Rakib said he would like to travel to Rayenda, his home town, to spend time with his family for the festival. This depends on how he does on the medical college admit exam. If he passes his priority will be to collect and file the application forms for the medical colleges he would like to attend. This might overlap the time of the festival. He will only travel to Rayenda if all applications are in place.

Rakib stated that he knew that the biggest Christian festival is on 25 December. He asked what I would do for the holiday. I told him that I would be traveling to Salt Lake City, Utah to visit with my daughters and great grand daughter. We would enjoy good food, exchange gifts and spend some quality time together. My daughters are also going to go skiing. I informed him that Salt Lake City had some of the best skiing in the world. Rakib remembered hearing about the winter Olympics that were held there. I asked if he knew what snow was. He said he read about snow, skiing, and snow boarding in a book but had never seen it.

Rakib asked if I had told the scouts about the Med. College admit exam that he will take on 20 November. I said yes. He reminded me that if he is admitted to a Medical college he will have only two weeks to come up with the \$15,000 tuition fee and that his family did not have the means to pay this fee. He requested that I ask

the scouts to pray for him, that he may do well on the exam. He said that God has great power and he believes in the power of prayer.

Rakib reminded me that it has been almost two years since we met, when *Hands on Disaster Relief* (HODR) brought me to Rayenda Bangladesh for the Cyclone Cidr relief effort. He said that his family visited his Grand Mother and Uncle who live in a very remote area near the Sunderbans National Forest, and they are doing well. Their home was totally destroyed by the cyclone. Rakib brought it to the attention of HODR who made arrangements to have a new home built for them. Rakib informed me that when HODR closed its operation in Rayenda they had a closing celebration. Marc Young, the project director, invited Rakib to attend. Rakib assisted Marc when he first arrived in Rayenda. He acted as an interrupter, introduced him to village officials, and helped him find a hotel. Rakib said he was just being a *good scout* and *helping other people at all times*. He said “my goal to be a good scout and a good citizen of the world”. He also stated that helping other people is the main goal of scouts around the world, and that God wants us to help other people. The community thanked HODR for all of their help. When HODR closes a project they hold a lottery where they give away the project equipment and supplies to the community members who helped them and the families who were assisted. It costs too much to transport the equipment to the next project so they give away items such as bunk beds, kitchen supplies and left over food, saws, hammers, lumber, etc. They try to make sure that everyone who attends the closing ceremony receives something. Rakib asked if I would visit Bangladesh again. He said he would like to introduce me to his friends. I told him it was not likely that I would visit again.

I asked Rakib how he spent his day today. He said he woke at 7:00 AM, went to the cyber café to collect study material and email, he studied the rest of the morning, he took a bath around 1:00 PM, then he studied in the afternoon and evening, today Rakib read a general knowledge book. The medical college admission exam has a general knowledge segment. He attended coaching class in the late afternoon.

I recently sent an email to a scouter in Dhaka who had helped me with logistics when I traveled to Bangladesh. I asked him if he could assist Rakib to get involved in a Rover Scout group in Dhaka. I also asked him if I could give Rakib his telephone number and email address. He replied this week and was very impressed with how the scouts in the U.S. were helping Rakib. He stated “this is what scouting is about”. He said he would help Rakib any he could to get involved in a scout program in Dhaka.

Rakib told me that his birthday is December 31. He asked the date of my birthday. I told him it had just passed, it was in October. He was quite upset that I had not told him sooner, he wanted to extend good wishes to me on that day. I don't know if it is traditional for people to give gifts to each other on birthdays but, I asked Rakib if there was anything he needed. He was reluctant to answer. When I pushed for a reply he said he would like to receive scout badges from our troop or BSA. I think he would enjoy receiving the Troop 1776 Appalachian Trail Backpacking patch, the Harry Schmidt 200 Mile Backpacking patch, and the E.R. Paley High Adventure patch. A council shoulder patch and a Teton / Yellowstone high adventure patch would also be a great idea. I suggested a few other things; when I was in Rayenda I gave Rakib a few Power Bars. He had heard about energy bars but had never seen one. I think these would be a good food supplement for the days when the hostel food is as Rakib would say “not good quality”. I asked Rakib if he had a scout uniform. He said yes, and that he wore it to the centennial of scouting jamboree he attended in 2007. Since then he has grown and the uniform no longer fits. He will need to buy a new one but, he cannot afford that expense. One of his teachers who is a scout leader told him that if he joins a scout group in Dhaka he will need “good shoes” (hiking boots). He told me that when he attended the 2007 scout jamboree a friend loaned him good shoes for the event. I asked Rakib how much a scout uniform and good shoes would cost. He told me that a scout shirt cost about 600 taka (\$9 U.S.), pants about the same. Good shoes cost maybe 2000 taka (\$30 U.S.), for shoes made in Bangladesh and 3000 taka (\$45 U.S.) for foreign made shoes. Rakib said he would donate his old uniform to a scout in need of one when he returned to Rayenda. Maybe there is a scout family who would like to purchase a new scout uniform for Rakib.

Rakib asked me to give the scouts his email address. He would like to hear more about them. I have been reluctant to give the email address out. I was afraid that he may be overwhelmed with email and have to spend

a lot more time at the internet café, taking time away from study and spending money he does not have on internet access. I now feel that Rakib is very capable of managing his time and finances. I will send the email address to the scouts under a separate email. I don't want to put it in this update since these updates are posted on the troop website where the world can view them. Rakib would like to hear more about the Scout's families, scouting activities, and American culture. He would also like to hear about the professions the scouts desire to pursue.

In past conversations Rakib said he was not feeling well. I told him he sounded better. He said he used a little of the money we sent to buy some medicine from a pharmacy, and it helped him. He had also spent some money to buy "good food" when the hostel food was "not good quality". I think it was money well spent. I asked how much it costs to see a doctor. He said a consultation costs a lot of money, 500 taka (\$7.50 U.S.), without medicine or tests. He said he may see a doctor after his exam if he has any money left.

Rakib reminded me that the medical college admit exam will be held on 20 Nov. and he will spend the rest of the month waiting for the results and applying to medical colleges if he passes the exam. He also reminded me again that if he is accepted to med school he will need 10 luc taka (15,000 U.S.) for tuition. One luc taka is equal to 100,000 taka. This is a lot of money in Bangladesh. This tuition pays for 5 years of medical college.

Rakib ended the call with "give my love to the Scouts, your family and friends".

Mr. Paley, ASM Venture  
Troop 1776

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*After I hung up I looked out my kitchen window. I saw Boy Scouts from Troop 90 walking down the street carrying bags. I knew that being close to Thanksgiving that they were participating in the BSA **Scouting for Food** program. They were collecting food to give to the local food bank. I immediately got a bag and went to my cabinets and loaded it with food. By the time I had the bag full the scouts were pretty far down the street. I ran down the street to catch up to them. They were quite happy to accept my donation as there collection was lighter than they anticipated.*