

Rabib Update June 21, 2009

I called Rakib this morning, Sunday June 21, 2009. Rakib asked how my family and my Scouter friends were doing. I informed Rakib that in the US it is Fathers day, a day when we honor our fathers. He informed me that it is also Fathers Day in Bangladesh.

In my last update I stated that Rakib was in need of a cell phone so he could continue communication with us. After reading the update the Wildgen Family immediately contacted me and offered to buy a phone for Rakib. I went directly to a Western Union agent and sent Rakib money to buy the phone that the Wildgen's offered to purchase for him. I had just 36 hours before he was to depart for Dhaka. I did not know if I would be able to communicate with him or if I could send him money when he arrived in there. Rakib informed me that he would need an account at a bank to receive money from Western Union. He did not have money to open an account. I wanted him to have the money in hand before he departed Rayenda. I knew he could receive it there through his Fathers bank.

Rakib's Father's banker has been following the story of how Boy Scouts in the US have been sending money through Western Union and helping his son with the cost of his education. I was a little slow getting the money we sent him in May to the Western Union office. Rakib needed some of it to pay for his final examination costs in Rayenda. When Rakib's Father asked the banker if the money had arrived yet, he was told no. But the banker offered to loan him the money until the funds arrived. He was confident that the Boy Scouts in the USA would be sending the funds soon.

On June 17th at 6:00 PM Rakib departed his village of Rayenda on the night bus; his destination was Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. When I was in Rayenda we were advised not to use the night bus. Occasionally hoodlums will set up road blocks at night and rob the passengers on the bus. I was very concerned when I got a call from Rakib's cell phone number at 1:00 AM Bangladesh time on the night he was traveling on the bus. I thought he might have encountered a problem. I was in an area with poor cell phone reception and I could not get through when I tried to return the call. When I got an area with better cell service I tried again and I got a message that the number was not in service. I became even more concerned about him. When I called Rakib at our scheduled time, this morning, Sunday June 21, Rakib brought me up to date on his travel and progress in Dhaka. Rakib told me he got the money for the cell phone before he departed Rayenda, but he waited until he got to Dhaka to buy one. He could get a better phone at a better price in the city of Dhaka. He told me that during the night he talked a bit with a man who sat next to him. Rakib told the man that he was a Scout and how the Boy Scouts in the US were helping him. He also informed the man that we sent him money to buy a mobile phone and that he had his own simm card to use in the phone when he got one. The man told Rakib that he was a Scouter also. He offered to let Rakib use his simm card in his mobile phone so he could call Bob, his Scouter friend in the US and let him know that he was on the bus and safely on his way to Dhaka. That is how I got the call at 1:00 AM Bangladesh time.

At about 6:00 AM on the morning of June 18th Rakib arrived at the main bus terminal in Dhaka. Rakib told me that the bus was delayed for awhile when they had to wait for a ferry for the final leg of the bus trip. For the final leg of the trip the bus is loaded on a ferry and is transported down the Bariganga River to a dock in Dhaka. The ferry takes about an hour to reach Dhaka They cram as many people, cars, trucks and busses on the ferry as they can. It is a wonder how they can float with all that weight on them (Sometimes they don't). Rakib's trip took about twelve hours. That's not bad. When I took the same route on the day bus it took us ten and a half hours to make the trip. During the day passenger vehicles receive priority loading and go ahead of the trucks on the ferries. At night they do not and they have to get in line with the trucks, so that is probably why it took Rakib longer to make the trip.

Rakib's brother, who lives and works in Dhaka, met him at the bus terminal and took him to buy a mobile phone and showed him around a bit. He also helped him learn the transportation system that he would need to use to get to his class and helped him locate hostels for lodging while attending the coaching class. Rakib stayed with his brother the first night.

On Friday June 19th Rakib checked into the hostel where he will be staying. I believe the hostel he is staying at caters to university students. He met other students there. Some, like him, are hoping to be admitted to a medical college. He also located where his medical college entrance exam coaching class would be held and made arrangements to attend. Friday evening and Saturday are holly days in Bangladesh and many businesses are closed and services are limited. Rakib observed the Holly days and spent time getting to know the other people at the hostel.

I believe Sunday was Rakib's first day of coaching class. He told me he had to use transportation to get to class. I asked him if he used a rickshaw. He said "no it is too expensive. I had to use two busses to get to class." He also stated that the bus cost six to seven taka each way (about ten cents US) and that he had not allowed for this cost when he estimated how much he would need for two months of expenses while attending coaching class. He thinks he will have enough money to cover his costs though. Rakib went on to tell me that there were forty students in his class. He said that 38 were from wealthy families in the Dhaka area. Just two of them were from poor families. He said "most poor people could not dream of attending medical college and becoming a doctor". I asked if there were any girls in his coaching class. He told me there were none in his class. There were separate coaching classes for women students. He informed me that the medical college classes are coed though. He told me that the mentality about women and men's roles in Bangladesh is changing.

Rakib has told all of his new friends about his Scout friends in the US. They are all very interested in Rakib's story. One of his new friends has an email address and Rakib asked me to send him some pictures of me and the scouts so he could show them to his friends. The friend does not have a computer; he uses an internet café to access the internet. This friend is also going to show Rakib how to setup his own email address and instruct him on how to use the internet.

Rakib's Scouting:

Some of the students he met at the hostel and in class are Scouts. Several of them have earned the Bangladesh Presidential Scouting Award (equal to eagle in the US) Rakib has already joined a Rover Scout group in the area where he is residing. He informed me that due to his studies he would not be able to participate in Scouting activities until he is accepted in medical college. Many colleges in Bangladesh sponsor Scouting groups. College age Scouts are Rover Scouts, similar to venture scouts in the US. Rover Scouts have until they are 21 years old to earn their Presidential Rover Scout Award. It is Rakib's goal to earn this award. Bangladesh Scouts have until they are 18 to earn the Bangladesh Presidential Scout Award. They have until age 21 to earn the Bangladesh Presidential Rover Scout Award. It requires much more community service and many more hours of leadership to earn the Rover Scout Award.

Even though Rakib has been in Dhaka for just a short time he has already preformed some community service with his new Scout friends. For the first time ever Bangladesh is using daylight savings time. Many illiterate and uninformed people are confused and frightened about the time change. Many don't understand and think something bad is happening. Rakib and his fellow scouts have canvassed the neighborhood and educated people about the time change. They are explained that the time change is temporary and it is designed to save energy and to help Bangladesh reduce the amount of chemicals that are released into the atmosphere. The government estimates daylight savings time will save 20% of the electricity that they use. Rakib and his fellow Scouts explain climate change to the people they talk to. Educated people in Bangladesh are well aware of climate change and that it is causing rising sea and river levels, and endangering farm land in the low lying areas of Bangladesh. I am amazed at just how progressive Bangladesh is. When I visited last year I learned that the country had banned styrofoam cups, packing material and plastic shopping bags due to their negative effect on the environment. They also recycle cardboard and plastic bottles. There was an awful lot of industrial pollution though.

Rakib told me "*I'm very proud to be a Scout*".

Rakib reminded me that if he passes the medical school admit exam he will need \$15,000 by September. I told him we would try our best, but I could not promise that we could collect all of the money by then. He said that he was very grateful for all we have done for him and that he is very proud and fortunate to have us as friends. From his tone of voice I could tell that he was very excited to be where he is, and that there is a chance his dream might come true.

Once Rakib has an email address I am hoping that a Scout, I suggest the ASPL for services will be able to communicate with Rakib and to post many of these updates in the future. Sorry for the spelling and grammar errors, I usually do these updates late at night when I'm half asleep. Feel free to make corrections if it is posted to the Troop website.

Yours in Scouting,

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