

Rakib Update January 9, 2010

Correction

In the last update I stated that another scout leader and I were willing to advance the Troop funds to pay for Rakib's Medical College admission fee. We could be paid back with donations made to the Rakib Fund. The Troop Committee has not agreed to that offer and needs additional time to discuss the extent that the Troop will be involved in the Rakib education project and how donations will be accepted and how funds will be dispersed. I did not send any of the Troops funds that were donated to the Rakib education fund over the past month to Rakib for his admission fees. I did send him money to buy cloths needed to meet college dress code requirement, and to buy a new scout uniform. (This is explained later in the update). All funds donated prior to December were sent to Rakib to pay for his education and living expense while attending, community college and medical college admission exam coaching class.

In my last update I stated that Rakib had to pay his entire admission fee in just a few days. There was no way he could come up with the money that fast. Through my search for individuals and companies to help Rakib I found Dr. Ahmed, who is a cardiologist from Maryland and grew up in Bangladesh and now practices in the US. He and his wife offered to help Rakib financially and as a mentor. Dr Ahmed contacted Dr. Mohsin, a friend in Bangladesh who is a doctor at the hospital associated with the medical college Rakib where Rakib was offered admittance. Dr. Ahmed asked him to assist Rakib any way he could. Rakib contacted Dr. Mohsin and asked for advice when he was told he needed the money in just a few days. Dr. Mohsin tried to call the principal to ask him to give Rakib more time to produce the money, but the receptionist would not put his call through. He advised Rakib to try to see the principal himself and tell him his admission fee was coming from the US and ask for more time. Rakib tried twice to see the principal but the receptions would not grant him access to the principal. Rakib tried one more time. This time he asked the receptionist to tell the principal that his father was a freedom fighter he was one of the students who was offered admission under the seats offered to families of Freedom Fighters. This time the principal agreed to meet him. Rakib explained his story and he was granted one business day. Friday and Saturday the banks were closed for the Victory Day holiday. Victory Day celebrates Bangladesh's victory over Pakistan, the conflict which earned Rakib's father the honor of being a Freedom Fighter. This may be the reason Rakib was given additional time. Still this was nearly impossible to get money to Rakib in less than three days. Dr. Ahmed said he often sent money to Bangladesh and it takes him 10 days to send money through a bank. I told him I had had good success with Western Union. He was not familiar with their service so he did not want to use it. He asked his friend Dr. Moshin to loan Rakib \$3000 US. And we would figure a way to pay him back at a later date. I sent \$6000 of my personal money to Dr. Mohsin through Western Union. Rakib had to come up with the rest. He contacted his cousin (Rakib refers to him as his brother), he said because he is an

employee of the Dhaka City water department, and as a government employee he could borrow up to 4 lakh taka (about \$3000 US) under a program they had. He went to the bank on Sunday morning and was told he could have the money tomorrow. This was too late, Rakib needed the money by 12:00 noon or his seat would be given to another student. Rakib and his father then contacted every distant relative he could think of, they finally found his uncles sisters husband and told him his story. The man agreed to loan Rakib the balance of the money he needed, about \$3000 US. Somehow Rakib got the money a few minutes before 12:00 noon. He knew he would arrive at the college late so he called Dr. Mohsin and asked what he should do. Dr Moshin was scheduled to perform surgery most of the day. He took time out of his schedule and called the principal and told him Rakib was on his way. Using the money from Dr. Ahmed, myself and the cash from Rakib's relative, Dr. Moshin helped Rakib obtained a bank money claim order to give to the medical college. Rakib called me from the bus that was taking him to the college to deliver the Admission payment in full, he was very excited. He said "I'm on the bus, going to the college and I have the money, Dr Moshin called the principal and he will wait for me to arrive". After Rakib delivered the money he called me back and said "I am going to attend medical college"! It was 1:00 AM New Jersey time. I said "that's wonderful, I'm proud of you, I'm going back to sleep now, I will call you in the morning". A few minutes later my phone rang again. I did not answer it. When I got up in the morning I noticed I had a voice mail. It said, "This is Dr. Mohsin, Rakib will be attending Dhaka national Medical College". A short time later I received an email from Dr. Ahmed; it read "Rakib will be attending medical college". None of us thought he would be able to produce the money in time. He is a very determined young man. About 1:00 PM U.S. / 1:00 AM in Bangladesh, I called Rakib. I thought I would wake him up. Not so he was still up and with his family celebrating his admission. The first thing he said was "Bob, thank all of the Scouts, without them this would not have happened. I'm going to be a Doctor". Rakib said his Mother screamed out with joy when he told her the news. She does not speak English but she told Rakib to tell the Scouts she knew it was Sunday in the US and that this is prayer day from many of us. She said would pray for all the Scouts today, that they may live long, healthy, happy, lives and that they may fulfill all of their dreams.

Since Rakib had just a few days to pay his admission fee or loose his seat. Dr. Mohsin, Rakib's relative, and I loaned him the money as private student loans. All parties would like to be paid back if there are donated funds available.

Since this has been a BSA Troop 1776 international service project, Dr. Ahmed and his wife would like to make a donation to the Troop 1776 Rakib Education Fund. That donation would be used to repay Dr. Mohsin for the money he loaned to Rakib. They were drawn to this project because of Rakib's desire to become a doctor, and the Boy Scout connection. If deemed inappropriate by troop committee they will repay Dr. Mohsin directly.

As for the money I loaned Rakib for his admission fees; I propose that I be repaid a portion from the troop Rakib Fund using donations made over the holidays. I would be repaid only the amount in the fund and any amount above that would become a personal donation from me. The troop would have no further obligation to repay me.

As to the loan from Rakib's relative; they are not wealthy people and they cannot afford to make the loan payments. Rakib has asked that we try to repay the loan or make the interest payments for them. It is my understanding that the interest on the loan is 30,000 Taka per year (about \$440 per year). Since Dr Ahmed and his wife are willing to pay 50% of Rakib's monthly expenses the balance of the monthly interest cost after their support would be about \$18 per month.

For Rakib's continuing monthly expenses I will try to get people and other BSA troops to adopt Rakib for a month by paying a month or more of his expenses. We have already had some Troop1776 families state that they would like to adopt Rakib for a month or more.

After his confirmed admission to Med. school and securing the admission fees Rakib visited with his Aunt and Cousin and relaxed for a few days. After the few days of relaxation he borrowed some English language books from some students at the hostel and started to study. He knew that the medical class would be taught in English and he said he "I want to gain more knowledge of English".

Rakib informed me that an orientation for medical college will be held on January 16. At that time he will be given his class schedule and a list of books he needs to buy. He is going to ask the principal to consider him for residence at the on-campus student hostel, seldom are first year students granted residency at the hostel. I asked Rakib if he could stay with his cousin to save some money. He said their apartment was small and it was more than two and a half hours from the medical college. For January Rakib will continue to reside at the hostel where he has been staying for medical exam coaching class. Though the hostel is not a real long distance from the med. school, it takes one and a half to two hours to get there due to traffic jams. Rakib must take a rickshaw then a bus and then another rickshaw to get to school. It will cost him about 80 taka (\$1.18 U.S.) per day for transportation and another 50 taka (0.76 U.S.) to buy his noon meal at the college canteen. If he is not granted residency at the on-campus hostel in February he will try to find a hostel closer to his college. Dhaka National Medical College is in the older part of the city. Space is at a premium there and rents are high. Rakib may not be able to move closer to school. He could spend another 3-4 hours per day studying if he did not have the 3-4 hour commute.

This is similar to the traffic jams Rakib referred too.



When Rakib was admitted to medical school he was informed that he would have to obey all school rules and have to wear dress cloths to class. Rakib let me knot that he did not own “good dress or good shoes” and he would have to buy them before going to class. I asked how much the cloths would cost. He said good shoes about 3000 to 4000 taka, pants 1000, and a shirt 700-800 taka. This is about \$86 U.S. He also said he wanted to start scouting again and he needed a new uniform. He outgrew his old one. He said the cost of the uniform would be about the same as the school dress except the good shoes (hiking boots) for scouting would be about 4000 to 5000 taka. I told him I would try to send him some money to purchase the clothing for school and a new scout uniform.

I told Rakib that I would be visiting with my daughters in Salt Lake City, Utah over the Christmas holiday and then going for a hike in the dessert in Arizona before returning home. I let him know that I would not be able to talk with him much during that time. He asked me to call him as soon as I got home, I agreed.

While on vacation I called Rakib to see how he was doing. He immediately wished me a happy Christmas. I let my daughter Dawn talk to him for a bit. Dawn works as a lab technician for a company that does medical research with animals. Dawn and her co-workers have been following Rakib’s story from the beginning.

On **January 7, 2010** I spoke with Rakib again. He informed me that he was continuing to study English on his own at the hostel. He told me that he told more students at the hostel about how the scouts in the US were helping him. The students said they were very proud of the Scouts in the USA, and admired how they were assisting Rakib with his education. Rakib said the students at the hostel were like brothers, they share happiness and sorrow.

Rakib asked if I had sent his Christmas email to the Scouts. I told him I did. He said it his hobby was learning about the customs, and religion of people around the world. He is aware that the people in the USA are from all around the world and he would like to learn more about the Scout families. Please feel free to share your family's history, customs and religious beliefs with Rakib. Rakib said that when he visited the on-campus student hostel he noticed that they had a television in the common area. Rakib did not have a television at home and his access to one was very limited. The students told him the use the TV to learn about the news around the world. I'm sure Rakib will take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about the people, cultures, and politics around the world.

Rakib said he would like to obtain books about foreign cultures and religions that are written in his native Bangle language. He has read some that are in the English translation but he finds them hard to understand. He said he is hopeful that he will be able to find such books in the National Medical College library when he starts school.

On this date we also talked a bit about Rakib's finances and about how much Rakib's monthly expenses will be. This is a very rough estimate, Rakib is still gathering information but, he gave me the info he had.

Following is a breakdown of Rakib's estimated expenses.

Monthly college tuition	5000 taka
Interest on loan from cousin	2500
Hostel (If admitted to on-campus)	2500
Food at hostel (includes cooks salary)	3000
Internet access	1000
Misc transportation	600
Transportation to visit family 4 times per year (Mrs. Wildgen suggested that we include this expense, I agree with her)	270

January 10, 2010 – I called Rakib today to let him know I sent him 14,971 taka (\$220 U.S.) through Western Union. The money is to buy cloths for school and a new scout uniform and hiking boots. This should also be enough to cover his transportation noon meals at school for the month of January.

Rakib told me he had visited the on-campus student hostel where he hopes to reside during medical school. He said it was about a fifteen minute walk from where his classes are held. While there he met some of the other med. students. The students told him

about some of the things he will need for class. They told him he will need a set of bones (a human skeleton). I'm not sure if they are just kidding with the freshman or telling the truth, he will find out at the orientation. He said the hostel is very basic, small and not good quality but, it is OK for a student life. He asked about the expense of living at the hostel. They confirmed the monthly cost of 2500 taka but, the fee did not include food. The students told him that they collect about 3000 taka per month from the students at the hostel and hire a cook who buys the food and prepares it for them. He expects that the food will be better than the food he gets at his current hostel.

Rakib asked me to send an email to the scout leader I knew in Dhaka and let him know that he would be contacting him and asking for his assistance in locating a Rover Scout group to join near the college in the old part of the city. I told him I would do so.

I received a call from my daughter Dawn this week. When she returned to work after her vacation in Utah she updated her co-workers about Rakib's progress. Her friends at work said they wanted to pay for Rakib's school clothes and his Scout uniform. They also want to buy a backpack for Rakib for his scouting activities. I let Rakib know about the backpack. He is going to see if he can buy one in Bangladesh. The cost to ship one from the US would be very high. I'm not sure if he will find one there, hiking backpacks are a luxury item and not readily available there.

This week one of our scout Moms handed me a donation from her family for the troop Rakib Fund. She said her son wanted to get involved with the troops community service and fundraising. She also said that she thought it would mean more to the Scouts if instead of giving money they could go to the store and buy something to give to Rakib. I understand her thinking and agree it would give the Scouts a closer connection to Rakib. Again the cost of shipping things to Bangladesh is high but, it may be worth the high cost since the items we would send are probably not available for purchase there.

I informed Rakib that I would be on a three day winter backpacking trek with the scouts next weekend and I would not be able to talk with him at our regular time next Sunday. He asked what we were doing. I told him about our winter OKPIK program and that we were traveling to the state of Vermont to hike and camp in the snow. Rakib is very interested in following the Troop 1776 scout activities. He also asked how the planning was going for the Grand Teton / Yellowstone high adventure trek. Rakib asked me to email photos of the Vermont trek to him. I agreed to do so. Rakib also asked me if we could send him some troop or BSA badges. He is hoping that he will be able to wear one on his new scout uniform shirt. Please feel free to suggest badges that we can send to Rakib. A troop 1776 hat might be a good item to send also. Rakib has a standard issue metal BSA neckerchief slide. I gave him one when I was in Bangladesh. Our troop wears the World Organization of Scouting badge on our uniform. One dollar from the sale of each WOS badge goes to promote and develop scouting around the world. This would be an appropriate badge to send him. He may be able to buy one in the scout store in Dhaka.

Rakib said he knew it was Sunday morning in the US and it was prayer day for many of us. He said he would pray for the scouts and their families that they may be healthy and have happiness in their lives. We said goodbye and I wished him good luck at the orientation next Friday.

January 20, 2010 – Rakib tried to call me yesterday but I did not get a chance to call him back. I returned his call today. Rakib said he attended the orientation and got list of books he will need. He also said he had already attended two days of class. He said one of his teachers made the students who did not have books yet sand up in class. He said he needed to buy books ASAP. He emailed me the list of books and I forwarded it to Dr. Ahmed. The doctor got right back to be and said he didn't think Rakib would need to buy all of the books on the list. He emailed me a list of the books he thought he needed to own. There were about fifteen books on the list. He would ask his friend Dr. Mohsin to see if Rakib could borrow some books from the college library. He would also ask Mohsin to see if he could find a set of bones that Rakib could use. I told Rakib I would send him \$350 U.S. (23,780 taka) This should be enough money to buy all of the books on the list but, he should contact Dr. Mohsin to make sure he needed all of them. If he did not need to buy all of the books he could use the left over money to pay for some of his February monthly expenses. Rakib said that some of the books are the latest edition but some were photo copies. \$350 for books sounds like quite a deal to me, I remember paying that for just two of my kids college books. Rakib asked me to call him at 6:00 AM tomorrow to give him the Western Union money claim number so he could collect the money and buy some books. He said he gets up at 6:30 AM so he can be in class at 9:00 AM. It takes one and a half to two hours to get to the college. He said he has been staying up until about 1:00 AM and reading a dictionary to improve his English vocabulary. Rakib said he had about 3000 taka in hand and that it should be enough to pay for transportation and his noon meal for the rest of January.

Rakib said he bought good dress, (dress cloths) and shoes for school and Scout pants and hiking boots with the money I sent last week. He held off on buying the Scout uniform shirt, he needed some money to but a workbook for one of his subjects and a note pad for his classes. He will buy the uniform shirt with the money we send him this week.

January 21, 2010 – I called Rakib at 6:00 AM Bangladesh time. Rakib answered the phone but he sounded like he was still asleep and incoherent. I hung up and tried again in 30 minutes. This time he sounded alert. Rakib had forgotten to inform me that the government had finally changed the rule and had changed the time back to standard time on 1 January. The first time I called him it was really 5:00 AM. I guess we are now even for the times he woke me in the middle of the night. I gave him the money claim number and wished him a good day.