

Rakib Update August 23 – September 13, 2009

### August 23, 2009

I spoke with Rakib today He informed me that he has not been feeling well and his grade fell a bit this week. He said he has been studying quietly. He informed me that today is the first day of Ramadan and he will be fasting for the next month.

Rakib informed me that he would need 20,000 taka for his September coaching class expense. This is 10,000 for coaching class, 5,000 for hostel and food, and 5,000 for transportation and internet access. He also informed me that he will have to travel to his district (state) Khulna to collect and file the forms required so he can take the medical school admit exam in October. He told me that it costs 520 taka to submit the application and about 1500 taka for transportation, food and hotel. Rakib told me that he has never traveled by train and would like to take the train to Khulna. He felt a little guilty about asking. The train cost about 200 taka (about \$3) more than the bus. I told him to take the train and enjoy seeing more of his country. The train takes longer than the bus. The bus to Khulna is put on a ferry and travels a long way down a major river to the road to Khulna. The train must travel a very long way in the opposite direction to a bridge to cross the river before it can head to Khulna.

Rakib said he talked with his family last week and they are doing well. His father has been able to sell some rice to earn a little money. He does not have money to buy much inventory or to add another product to sell. He told me that his Father asked him to tell us how much he appreciated us helping Rakib, his only son, to help make his dream come true.

Rakib said to give his cordial love to the scouts and their families and God bless and long life also.

### September 9, 2009

Rakib traveled to Khulna this week to collect and submit an admission test form for a medical college in his home district (state). Test application forms must be submitted in advance of the test. Rakib stayed overnight and returned to Dhaka the following day to resume his medical college admission test coaching class. Rakib took the bus to Khulna. He wanted to travel by train, but he found out that you have to make reservations a week in advance. He said the bus cost 350 taka (\$5.22 US) He said the bus cost more than the bus to his home town of Rayenda even though it is half the distance. The bus to Khulna is a high Quality bus. The bus to Rayenda, “not so good”. Rakib will return to Khulna to take the Medical college entrance exam on Oct. 6.

One of our scouts asked if a bike would be useful to Rakib. I asked him and he said that a bike is expensive, but if he were admitted to medical school he felt it would be useful. We talked a bit about the cost of things in Bangladesh. He told me that a bike cost 10,000 taka (\$149 US), a laptop computer 1,150,000 taka (\$1700 US), a average quality digital camera 28,000 taka (\$417 US), 79,000 taka (\$1179 US) for a good camera with the ability to take movie clips. Electronics are very expensive in Bangladesh. Rakib said that he would like to collect a camera so he can share his experiences with the scouts in the US. He visits the Troop 1776 website when he goes to the internet café and enjoys reading about the activities and seeing the photos. He also enjoys reading the Rakib updates.

Rakib informed me that he had emailed his secondary and higher secondary certificates of completion to me and asked me to share them with the scouts. He was very proud of the combined 10.0 GPA the highest score obtainable. His secondary education GPA was 4.94 and the higher secondary education GPA was 5.0. Rakib ended the call with “God be with you and your scouts”

September 13, 2009

I informed Rakib that I received his education certificates and that I shared them with the scouts at Thursday's troop meeting. Rakib asked what the scouts were doing. I informed him that the scouts would be working on canoe skills on a Delaware River trip on an upcoming weekend trip. Rakib stated that Bangladesh scouting was similar to US, but most activities are local. They don't get the opportunity to travel.

Rakib's teachers informed him that the Bangladesh medical College that he would like to attend will have only 110 seats available for the next term. It is anticipated that there will be 20,000 applications. It will be very difficult to obtain admission. Rakib stated that there are only 7 or 8 medical colleges in Bangladesh. He would like to apply to additional colleges but his funds are low. It costs 500 – 600 taka to collect a "admit" test application. He would also need about 20 taka for transportation to the other colleges in the Dhaka area. I told him I would see if we could send him some more money so he could apply to other medical colleges. One of Rakib's teachers informed him of a seminar where he could learn about how to apply for admission to medical schools in the US, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand who have programs for students from developing nations. These programs are offered to students from developing nations at a discount, about 10 – 12 luc taka (\$15,000 – \$18,000 US) per year. Rakib would not be able to pay this tuition. He is going to attend the seminar to see if there are any scholarships available. His teachers informed him that a student must be proficient in English to be eligible for a scholarship. I believe Rakib is. They informed him that a student applying for a scholarship must take an English proficiency test at the foreign country's embassy. It cost 8,000 taka to take the test. The highest test score is 10 marks, you must score 6 marks or higher to pass.

I asked Rakib if he had found any scout programs in Dhaka. He said that at his community college near his village many of his teachers were scout leaders. He was not sure if the college teachers at the coaching school were scout leaders. He would like to participate in scout activities but he now spends most of his time studying. Before I traveled to Bangladesh when I volunteered for the cyclone disaster. I met a Bangladesh national scout leader on the internet who offered to help me if I needed assistance when I came to Bangladesh. I emailed him and told him about meeting Rakib in Rayenda and how the scouts in the US were helping him with his education expenses. I asked if I could give his name & tel. number to Rakib. He said certainly and he would inform Rakib of scouting opportunities in Dhaka.

Rakib recently learned that some rich people in Bangladesh make donations to medical colleges and their son's and daughters get an advantage in admission to the school. Some don't even take the admit test and still get admitted.

I asked if Rakib had been able to explore the city of Dhaka. Rakib said that Dhaka is a very big city and he had not traveled very far from his hostel. He does not have extra money for transportation. He said that there were still many coaching class students at the hostel but some had dropped out so it is not quite as crowded.

We ended the call by wishing each other health and happiness for our family, friends and fellow scouts.