

Rakib Update July, 2010

It has been a while since my last Rakib update. I had a busy summer attending the Troop 1776 High Adventure trek to Grand Teton and Yellowstone. This update may be a bit long, but I hope you read it; there has been a lot of progress to report.

July 09, 2010

When we spoke this morning Rakib said “welcome home”. He said that Friday is a special day in Bangladesh (prayer day), and on the Fridays when we were on the Venture Trek he prayed that god would keep us safe. “Thanks for the prayers Rakib. The trek was adventurous, challenging, and dangerous at times, a few of us are sure that God was there for us when we slipped and were able to self arrest a fall, and avoid falling over one thousand feet into the canyon below”.

Rakib said his final exams are over and he is awaiting his marks. Rakib said he has started his second card (semester). He had no time off between semesters. He told me about his new areas of study in anatomy. He is starting to study the heart, lung, kidneys and all other organs of the body. He will also be studying the male and female genitalia and reproductive systems. Yesterday he spent four hours studying the stomach. Rakib said he will also be studying community medicine this card. The subject is not usually taught until the second year. Rakib’s teachers believe community medicine is very important and are including an extra year of study in the curriculum.

Cell phone service was very limited while we were in the back country on the Grand Teton trek. Rakib managed to get a message to me one day when we were in the front country. Rakib was late on his tuition and hostel payments and was getting some pressure to pay up. There was some confusion about who was sending Rakib money for his July expenses. I thought Dr. Ahmed was picking up the costs for the rest of the year. His money did not arrive. I tried to send Rakib money from Jackson Hole WY but it was the 4th of July holiday and the Western Union offices were closed. When I returned home I immediately sent Rakib money for his July expenses. The troop treasure reimbursed me with the money in the Rakib fund.

Rakib ended the call by wishing the Scouts, their families, and friends, good health, good fortune and Gods blessing.

July 09, 2010 follow-up

After speaking with Rakib last week I contacted Dr. Ahmed by email. He promptly replied. He said he wants to help Rakib but has a concern. He wrote that medical students are from wealthy families and he is afraid Rakib may want to live that life style. He said \$250 per month is a lot of money in Bangladesh and thought it might be excessive.

I told Rakib about Dr. Ahmed’s concern. Rakib got to meet Dr. Ahmed when he visited Bangladesh last month. Rakib said he is a nice man and he respects him very much, but he feels he may not be aware of current costs in the country. The dollar is also devalued at this time and you do not get as many taka for a dollar as you did in the past. Rakib gave me an itemized breakdown of his monthly expenses. I forwarded it to Dr. Ahmed. I verified most of the expenses and they seem to be accurate. Each month we send Rakib about 1,000 taka (\$15) extra for miscellaneous expenses.

I told Rakib that Dr. Ahmed thinks he should work part time or offer his services as a tutor to earn some money to pay some of his expenses. Rakib said it is difficult to find a part time job, but he would look into tutoring. Rakib spends most of his free time studying alone and in study groups. He has been getting great grades on weekly tests. We will have his first semester grades very soon. On Fridays he finds time to pray, works on long term projects and for recreation he goes for a walk with his friends. Starting this week he also attends Scout meetings on Fridays.

Personally I have conflicting feelings about Rakib working more that a few hours per week. I think he is using his time efficiently and his grades show it.

July 16, 2010

I finally found time to read the emails I received while I was on the Grand Teton high adventure trek. One was an email that my daughter Michele copied me on.

Michele works for a company that has a division that sells office equipment on a website. She has been trying to get one of her suppliers to donate a laptop for Rakib. When I returned home from the trek I read the email she copied me on. It seems that this little company, The Microsoft Corporation has learned about how the Boy Scouts in the US have been helping a Scout in a third world country. They have contacted their people in the Bangladesh area and may try to meet Rakib to learn more about him, his involvement in scouting, and his dream to become a doctor. I am hopeful that they will provide a computer for Rakib.

When I called Rakib this morning I wanted to immediately tell him the news about Microsoft. I had to wait my turn to speak. When he answered, he was very excited, he said; "Bob, Bob, I want to tell you something, I have great news". He went on to tell me he had received his final exam grades in two subjects.

In physiology Rakib placed 5th in his class. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place students were foreign students. Rakib said the foreign students from Nepal and India have an advantage. They learn English in at an early age through the public schools in their countries. All of the medical books are in English. Rakib received the second highest grade of all of the Bangladeshi medical students in his class. He received a score of 214.9, just 2.8 points behind the 1st place student. In Biochemistry Rakib was in the top 10% of his class, he placed 11th on the exam.

Rakib said sadly that many students fail those exams. They will be given the opportunity to study and take supplemental exams.

Rakib informed me that he had not received his grades in anatomy and community medicine. He said anatomy has many parts to the final exam and it takes the teachers' time to grade the test. He said he likes his study of community medicine. He is currently learning about community health, disease, and vaccinations. He is also learning about how to educate the public about health and doctor patient relations.

Rakib had some other news that he was anxious to share with the scouts in the US. Now that his first semester is complete Rakib has contacted scout leader Nurullah Masum. This is the Bangladesh Scout leader and former editor of the Bangladesh scouting magazine who assisted me when I traveled to Bangladesh. Mr. Masum offered to help Rakib find a scout group to join near his college. After meeting Rakib he invited him to join the scout group where he is the chair person. Rakib will have to travel by bus to where the Rover Scout group meets. It is about 45 minutes to one hour, depending on traffic, one way to the scout meetings. Rakib will have to use some of the extra money we send him each month to pay for the bus.

Rakib informed Mr. Masum of his desires to earn the Bangladesh Presidential Rover Scout Award, be a scout leader / trainer for the rest of his life, and his desire to help other people. Mr. Masum reviewed Rakib's current scout stage (rank) and told him that with his age and current rank he should be able to earn the Presidential Award in three and a half years. This would be spending the minimum time required in each stage. He said it would take most Scouts 5-7 years to earn the award.

In the USA about five percent of Boy Scouts earn the Eagle Scout Award. Last year in Bangladesh only 53 Scouts and 7 Rover scouts earned the Presidential Scout Award. There are about one million scouts enrolled in scouting in Bangladesh. That means that only about 1 / 100th of a percent earn the highest award in scouting. 5 out of 100 scouts earn the award in the USA, 6 out of 100,000 earn it in Bangladesh. It is quite an honor. Earning the Rover Presidential Scout Award requires a great deal of training, teaching younger scouts and service to the community. I wish Rakib success in reaching his goal.

Rakib said the rechargeable fan and light we bought for him had greatly improved his study condition, and he was very thankful for them.

I finally got an opening to tell Rakib the good news I had. I told him about my daughters contact with representatives of the Microsoft Corporation and how they are considering donating a laptop computer and that they may be contacting him. There was silence for a few seconds. When Rakib replied he said he was very grateful for everyone who was trying to support him, but he had a concern. He asked if the representatives would have to meet him at his college or dorm. Rakib said only my best friend knows I am from a poor family and that I am receiving assistance from scouts in the US. He was concerned that if the other medical students, most of whom are from wealthy families, found out he was from a poor family, they would not want to associate with him any longer.

I told Rakib that the representatives had his cell phone number and that I did not think they would show up unannounced. I told him that he was very articulate and that if they called him he should tell them about his concerns about how the publicity could jeopardize his relationship with the other students. Though there is not an official cast system in Bangladesh, there is a separation between social and economic classes.

As always Rakib ended the call by wishing health, happiness, and Gods blessings to al of us.

July 25, 2010

I spoke with Rakib today our usual weekly Sunday phone call, morning for me and Sunday night for him. He informed me that he still had not received his grade for his anatomy and community medicine courses. Rakib said he likes his teachers very much. They told him they like him because of his personality and because he tries very hard.

Rakib said he attended his first Scout meeting on Friday. The group name is the Universal Open Rover Scout Group. He took the bus to get to the meeting. Travel time was 1 hour each way because of traffic and it cost 22 taka (\$ 0.32) round trip. He said a rickshaw would be faster but it would cost 50-60 (\$ 0.75) taka round trip. He said he would continue to use the bus to save money.

At the scout meeting they worked on basic scout skills and discussed what it took to earn the Bangladesh Presidential Scout Award. The group will meet once a week and will also do community development service projects and go hiking and camping. There are nine Rover Scouts in the group, all male.

Rakib said he would like it if we could send him some USA, troop or council scout patches that he could share with his new friends in scouting. He gave me the address of his brother (cousin) and said it would be the best address to sent anything to him.

Rakib said he had recently viewed the Troop 1776 website and was pleased to see that my updates were posted there. He said he reviewed the updates and they were accurate. He asked if Ryan M. was still the webmaster, they exchanged a few emails while Ryan was webmaster. I told him that Ryan was no longer webmaster and that he would soon be attending the American University in Washington DC and that I believe he will be studying international relations. I told him that Greg S. was now webmaster and he was doing a great job.

Rakib asked what the Venture Scouts were planning for future Treks. I told him that I had been approached by scout Nigel L. and he had a great Idea for next summers Venture Trek. I told him it was in the initial review and approval stage at this time, and if approved Nigel would be the Venture Patrol Leader for the trek. Rakib said to give Nigel his love and that he would pray for him, that his trek would be safe and successful.

Rakib said he was very grateful for all we have done for him. He was very hesitant but he said he was in need of another shirt, pants and an apron. He has three shirts and two pants. One shirt and pants he brought with him from Rayenda. They are ok for casual wear after school, but they are not suitable for attending class. He also has one shirt that I bought for him last year as a Ramadan present. It is for festive occasions and is not suitable for attending class. The other shirt, pants, and one apron are the cloths we bought for him when he started medical college. He has to wash them every 3-4 days. The lab apron gets very dirty in a few days. A shirt, pants, and another apron would cost about 3000 taka (\$45 US). If a family would like to donate money to purchase them we could earmark the donation.

Since Rakib has started scouting again he is in need a pair of hiking boots and a backpack. My daughter Dawn and her co-workers have shown an interest in donation money for the scouting items, but to date they have not collected the money.

Many Scout families and Neshanic Reformed Church members have donated money to support Rakib. He asked me to give you his cordial love. He said he knows that without your support he would not be a medical student today. Some families have requested that I release their names when they made donations to encourage others to donate to the Rakib Fund. Others asked to be anonymous. One family recently said “if you get recognition and praise for the good things you do it does not mean as much, as you are getting something in return”. I can fully understand both thoughts.

Rakib ended the call by extending his love to all of us and said he would pray for our good health and happiness.