

Rakib Update 9/20/09 –

September 20, 2009

I spoke with Rakib this morning (late night in Bangladesh); Rakib said he had “happy news”. Tomorrow was the festival celebration of Eid-Al- Fidr, the end of Ramadan a month of fasting. For the past month Rakib has eaten meager meals only once a day. He said that no one in the hostel will sleep tonight as they start to celebrate the festival. He told me that the students had collected some money to hire festival lights to celebrate the festival. The hostel manage told them he would give them some GOOD FOOD for the festival. I asked Rakib how the regular food is at the hostel. He told me “not good...not bad. Sometimes the food is not good quality and he cannot eat it and he must starve. He some times uses the few extra dollars we send him to buy food when the hostel food is poor quality. Rakib said that many students would buy “new dress” for the festival. The festival is a time to give thanks for the harvest. It is customary to wear your best cloths and for wealthy people to give money to the poor. Rakib said he did not have money to buy “new dress”. I asked him what he would buy and how much it would cost. He said he would like to buy a panjabi. This is a very long shirt that extends down below the knee and is worn to the mosque. He said that it would cost about 600 taka. I told him that as his friend I would personally send him money to but new cloths for the festival. I told him I would send him about 1400 taka, (\$20 U S), with the next Western Union transfer.

After learning that there are a limited number of seats available at the Bangladesh medical College and Khulna Medical College (schools that are Rakib’s first choice), Rakib looked into applying to other medical colleges in Bangladesh. He found that the deadline for applications had passed for many. There were a few that did not have deadlines and several that would accept late applications, but a late fee would have to be paid. Rakib asked if we could send him an additional 8,000 taka to pay for the admission test applications and transportation to the colleges so he could “collect” and file the forms. I told him we would send the additional money and that he should proceed with the additional college applications.

Rakib asked how the Troop 1776 Scouts were doing. I told him we were getting our first year Boy Scouts ready for their first backpacking trek and that I was working with another Scout (Brian W.) on planning a high adventure Trek to Grand Teton & Yellowstone National Park for the summer of 2010. Rakib told me that the manager at the internet café told him about Google Earth. Using it he was able to locate Neshanic NJ. He also informed me that he was able to zoom in on my home on Vollers Dr. He had the exact address because it is printed on the Western Union receipts when I send him money. I tried to zoom in on Rakib’s home, hoping to share it with the scouts, but it will not zoom it that close in that part of the country of Bangladesh. I could get an over view of the village of Rayenda and it brought back memories of my time spent volunteering there.

We went on to discuss Rakib’s financial needs for the upcoming month of October. Rakib stated he needed 10,000 taka for coaching class, 5,000 for hostel lodging Inc. food, 5,000 for transportation and internet access. He also stated that he needed about 8,000 taka to pay for additional college admission test forms and transportation. This includes travel and lodging to Khulna where he would take his first Medical College entrance exam.

Rakib has continued to research medical school in foreign countries. His teachers have given him some direction. He has found a program in England. Without a scholarship the cost is 700,000 – 800,000 taka (\$10,000 - \$12,000) per year. He would also have to pay for a visa and air transportation. He was not sure if room and board were included in the cost.

We ended the call and Rakib wished all of us “good health and mind”