

Rakib Update Feb. 16, 2010

January 25, 2010

Rakib told me he received the email I sent him. It contained some photos of our Okpik trip. Rakib asked how the scouts did on the Vermont cold weather snowshoe trip. I told him that they all did well, and that most build snow shelters and slept in them overnight. Rakib said to tell the scouts on that trip that he was proud of them. He thanked me for the photos and asked that I send more of the scouts and our activities. He said he would like to have a camera so he could share his experiences with the scouts in the USA.

I asked Rakib how his family was. He said they are well, but his sisters still have not been able to resume school due to lack of money. He tries to talk to his family each week. I told him that one of our scout's moms thought we should budget money each year so he could visit his family back home in Rayenda a few times per year. He was grateful for the thought and said he would very much enjoy being able to visit with them. He said round trip bus fare is \$600 taka (\$8.83 U.S.) for the 10-12 hour trip. He would also need a few taka for food in route.

Rakib said he talked on the phone with Nurullah Masum, the scout leader who helped with my travel on my trip to Bangladesh. He is going to try to meet with him on Thursday. Mr. Masum agreed to help Rakib find a Rover Scout group to join near his college. When we last talked I told Rakib that my daughter Dawn, and her co-workers were going to donate the money to pay for his college cloths, scout uniform, boots and a backpack for scouting and I asked him to see if he could purchase a backpack locally. He said he found some foreign made backpacks in the local market and they cost about 2200 taka (\$33 U.S.). He did not think they were the same quality as the backpacks used by our scouts.

We talked a bit about his estimated monthly expenses for the month of February. Rakib listed all of his anticipated expenses including, the balance needed for Jan. transportation, Feb. tuition, hostel, transportation, lunch, internet access, and misc expense totaled 16,200 taka. His teachers also informed him that all students must pay 800 taka per month to pay for photocopies of lesson plans. The total monthly expenses for Feb. are 17,000 taka (\$240 US). I told Rakib I would get the money to him ASAP.

Rakib said he has been attending class and the classes are from 8:00 AM to 2:30 PM. There is a break for food from 12:00-12:30PM. He said he had bought most of the books he needs with the money we sent him. He still needed to buy a few guidebooks with the remaining money. He said that he had not allowed for his transportation cost to college and his noon meal cost when he gave me his estimated expenses for the month. He said he needed 1500 taka to pay for these expenses for the rest of the month. Transportation is by rickshaw and bus and cost 80 taka (\$1.18 U.S.) per day. His noon meal cost 50 taka (74 cents U.S.) per day.

Rakib said he talked with Dr Mohsin and he will try to find bones for him to use. Rakib has anatomy class every day and has to bring the bones they are studying that day with him.

January 31, 2010

I spoke with Rakib this morning and Rakib informed me that he is attending medical college class 6 days a week. Class is going well and he said "my teachers are good and they try their level best to teach".

Rakib informed me that Dr. Mohsin could not locate any bones for Rakib to use. I told him I would send him 15,000 taka (\$220 U.S) tomorrow to buy bones. New bones cost 20,000 taka used bones cost 15,000 taka. To conserve the money we collected for him he agreed to buy used bones. Since the bones have been used by a previous student there may be some that are broken or missing.

Rakib's teacher still could not tell him when hostel space may be available in the on campus student hostel. He is still living in the hostel that is one and a half hours from the college and commuting by rickshaw and bus every day. Rakib and three other students found an apartment in a private house near the college. The cost is high, 20,000 taka per month, (5,000tk each) and there would be no one to cook for them so they would have high food costs in addition to the rent. The house would also require a security deposit and the first month rent in advance. Rakib asked what he should do. I told him I knew

the commuting time was taking away from his study time but, I thought he should stay where he was for the next month and hope that space at the student hostel opens up next month. He agreed.

I asked Rakib what his plans were for after he becomes a doctor. I asked if he would try to help the poor people in Bangladesh who do not have access to medical attention. Rakib told me he would like to help not only people in Bangladesh, but also poor people around the world. He said that in Bangladesh only wealthy people have access to good medical service. He said "I get a pain in my heart because poor people in need do not get medical care". He informed me that he was upset that doctors and hospitals charge 300 taka for a lab test that costs them just 6 to 8 taka. In the rural area of Bangladesh lab tests are simply not available at all.

Rakib extended best wishes for the Scouts and their families and said he would pray that God will watch over them.

February 7, 2010

I called Rakib this morning. He asked what the scouts were doing. I told him I have been working with the Venture Scouts planning the Teton / Yellowstone Trek. I told him that we would most likely have three patrols with three or four Scouts and two to three leaders in each one. I let him know we would be booking airfare and applying for backcountry hiking permits soon. I told him I would email a photo of the Grand Tetons to him and told him that they were part of the Rocky Mountains. I told Rakib it was Super Bowl Sunday in the US. He did not know what it was.

I asked him how school was this week. He said he had already taken 3 exams and passed all of them. He also informed me that he had paid his tuition for February and had to inform me that it was more than the 4000 taka he told me it would be. He was unaware that there is tax on college tuition. The tax was 180 taka so, going forward he will need 4180 taka per month for tuition. He had enough extra taka to pay the tax. He also informed me that he had purchased the bones with the money we sent him last week. He bought a good set of used bones for 15,000 taka. Rakib said he still had to purchase notepads for his practical work and that he was hoping to get to the market tomorrow. The students use these notepads for their practical work, they make diagrams and sketches which are part of their grade.

Rakib said he had to inform me of good news. He said, "my teacher informed me a room is now available in the student hostel on campus, and it should be available in a day or two". Rakib said the student hostel has about 30 rooms and there will be 3 students per room. His present hostel has 4-6 students per room. Rakib said having only 3 students in the room should be quieter and make studying easier. Rakib said he was required to pay the rent for his old hostel for one full month in advance and no refund for unused days is available. The new hostel on campus also requires that the full month be paid in advance and there is no credit available for the days he did not live there this month. He asked me what he should do. I told him he should take the room before someone else does. We discussed how much money he would need to move in. He said the monthly hostel fee is 3,000 taka. Food cost is 3,500 taka. About 3,200 taka pays for food & drinking water which the teacher or the students will purchase. It also includes the cost of a daily English language newspaper per room. The students read the newspaper to learn about world events and also to improve the English reading skills. 300 taka per month pays for the "cooker". I now realize how hard English can be. If someone who drives is a driver, than why should not someone who cooks be a cooker? Rakib said that this building was newly acquired by the college and it had no cooking equipment. The students will be required to donate 1,000 taka each to buy pots and serving utensils. He will also need to buy his own plate, glass, fork and spoon, this will cost 200 taka. Another item needed is a pot for the bathroom for "spilling water". Each room has its own bathroom. Most bathrooms in Bangladesh have squat toilets that do not flush. You pour water down them after you use them. The pot for the bathroom can also be used to wash cloths. The three students in the room will share the cost of the bathroom pot and will cost each about 500 taka. The hostel provides a bed but, the students must supply their own mattress and bedding, this will cost about 1,600 taka. He also needs a trunk and padlock for his cloths and personal items, cost 2,000 taka. Other furnishings needed are a bookshelf 2,000 taka, a table (desk) 1,000 taka, and a chair. Rakib said he could buy a normal chair for 500 taka and a good chair

(padded seat) costs 1,200 taka. He said he would be sitting in the chair for many hours while studying and he asked me which chair he should buy. I told him to buy the good chair; he will be sitting in it for five years.

I asked Rakib if he knew who his roommates would be. He said he did and that he was friends with both of them. Rakib said he had made friends with almost all of the first year med. students. He went on to tell me that the medical college had accepted 31 foreign students. 28 were from the country of Nepal. Since the Scouts in Troop 1776 spend a lot of time in the mountains they may know of this country. It contains the highest mountain in the world. Rakib said the students from Nepal are very friendly and many of them are good friends. The Nepali students told Rakib, Nepal is a poor country and much of their income comes from visitors. The other foreign students were from India. Rakib said one of the students from India had become a very good friend. Rakib said after his first professional exam in one and a half years they will get a 30 day break from school. The friend from India invited Rakib to visit India and meet the student's family during the break. Rakib said he would very much like to go.

I told Rakib I would send him about 19,000 Taka (\$280 U.S.) so he could pay for the hostel rent and all of the items he need to furnish it. This included an extra 1,000 taka to pay for a few additional items he may need. He said he needed a few more note pads so he could do rough sketches before he did the final sketch in the practical notepad which gets graded.

Rakib ended the call by asking me to thank all of the Scouts again for their help. He is very grateful and said he will try his level best to do well in medical college. He wished all Gods grace and good health of body and mind. I returned the good wishes on behalf of the scouts.

February 14, 2010

When I spoke with Rakib this morning I told him it was Valentines Day in the US. Rakib informed me that Valentines Day is also celebrated in Bangladesh. I also told Rakib that it was Presidents Day weekend in the US and explained its meaning.

Rakib asked what the scouts were doing. I told him the scouts are preparing for the Klondike Derby and the Venture Scouts had finalized their hiking plans for the Grand Teton portion of the Teton / Yellowstone Trek and would be submitting backcountry hiking permit applications this week. I let him know the Venture Patrol will be working on activity plans for the Yellowstone portion of the trek this week.

Rakib said he was now living in the student hostel. He said he is comfortable there. There are two other students in the room and they are "good people", all are first year med. students. The hostel is just a 10 minute walk from his classes. Living in the new hostel will save him money that he was spending on transportation from the old one. He will now also have more time to study. He paid the monthly rent, food, and his share of the cook's salary. Rakib said he enjoyed getting an English language newspaper each day. The paper is paid for out of the food money. He said he was able to purchase a table, chair, bedding and a bookcase with the money we sent him. He said he had a little left over to buy miscellaneous items for the rest of the month. Rakib said the food was better quality than the food he was served at his old hostel.

Rakib told me that he went to meet Mr. Nurullah Masum this week. He is the scout leader I knew from Bangladesh. They talked a bit about finding a Rover Scout group or Rakib to join. Mr. Masum told Rakib that he thought he should concentrate on getting settled in at college right now. He has plenty of time to work on earning the Presidential Rover Scout Award. He said Mr. Masum will send me an email explaining his thoughts. He told Rakib he thinks he should join a scout group in about six months, June or July and he will assist him in finding a group at that time.

I asked Rakib how his study was going. He said he had an exam today. He did not know his marks but he thinks he did well. He said he had four classes at this time. He is using the bones he purchased for anatomy class. All first year students take anatomy the class. He said he is also taking a community

medicine and public health class. The class usually takes place in the second year of med school but, his teacher thinks it is an important class to have and is teaching it in the first year.

Rakib gave me an outline of his typical day. He gets up at 6:00 AM, takes care of personal items and has breakfast at 7:30 AM. Because he now has less travel time he is able to meet with other students from 7:30-8:00 AM. They use that time to discuss class topics. Morning class is from 8:30 – 12:00. Lunch is 12:00-12:30 PM, afternoon class from 12:30-2:30 PM. Rakib then returns to his hostel and reads easier general knowledge books from 4:00-6:00 PM. From 6:00 PM-2:30 AM he reads medical books, he finds these books more difficult to read, they are all written in English.

I asked if he had any free time. He said he attends school six days a week but he has some free time on Friday, prayer day. He usually finished his diagrams and sketches in his practical notebook and goes for a walk with his friends.

I asked if the college had a website that the scouts could view. He did not know but, he would find out and let me know next week. I told Rakib I would try to send him an email with some photos of the recent scout activities.

We wished each other good health, and happiness. Rakib asked me to give the Scouts his good wishes.