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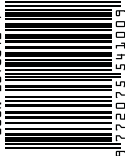
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Legend of the East
Down the road
Song of the little road
Bangladesh: Beauty within
A tale of adventure
Full circle Sri Lanka

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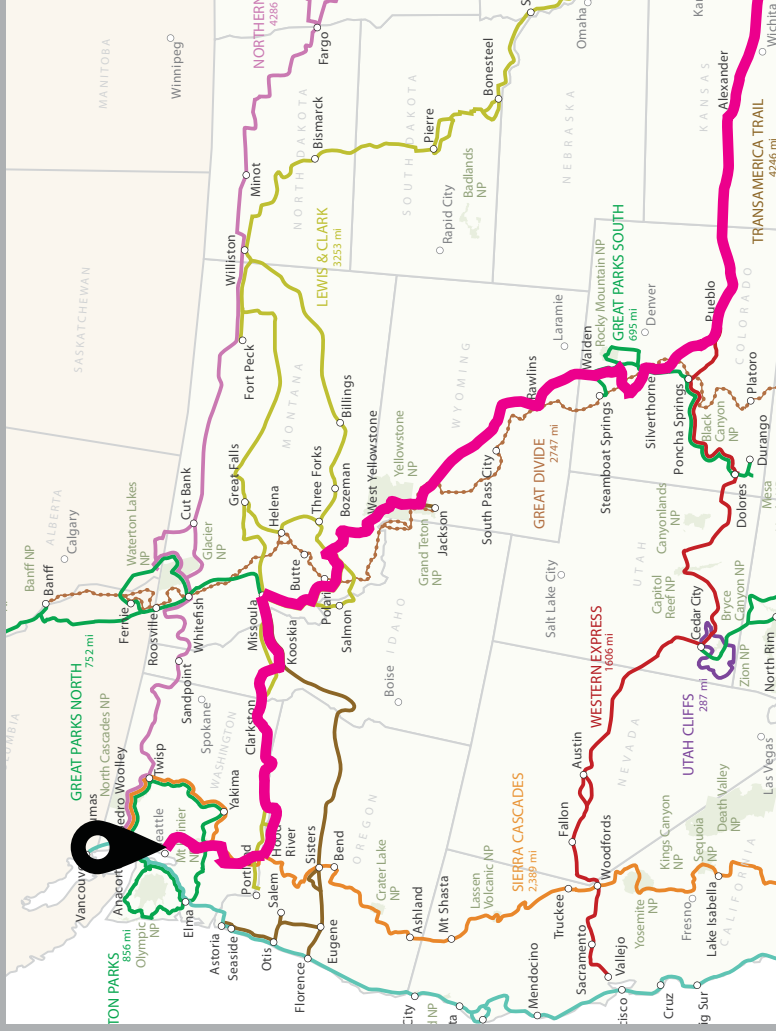
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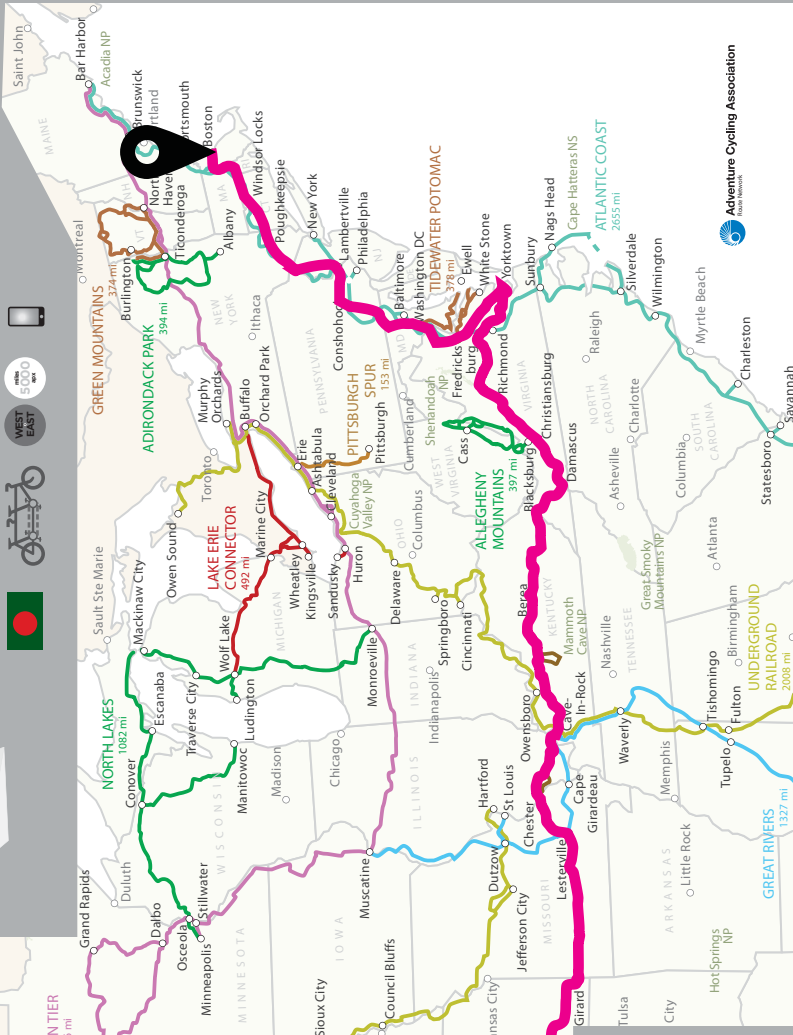


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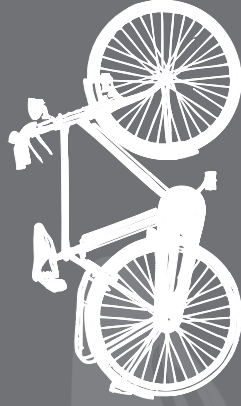


TRINO, supported by countries most active and oldest youth lead adventure community – Kewkradong Bangladesh. This is a fully non-political, non-violence, non-profitable organization originated in Bangladesh. In order to popularize adventure related sports like urban and rural trekking, mountaineering, high altitude trekking, mountain biking, adventure water sports, Kewkradong believes in creating local enthusiasm towards volunteerism and conceptual adventure/humanitarian/ nature building projects in Bangladesh. Kewkradong shows professional attitude during handling different projects, expedition planning, concept development and other organizational responsibilities.

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"As I look round the world, a memory comes to life: I seem to find in everything the union of you and me in limitless forms. Looking at the grass-covered quivering earth in the new light of the harvest month, I search my soul and a joy overwhelms my heart: I seem to know this unuttered speech. In the heart of the mute earth an emotion is ever alive. On this soul of teeming life, you and I must have spent endless time."



What if I say Bangladesh will be a premium bike destination? Well, majority will differ me. How could I even think of saying it? In sane. Only to answer you, this time we have compiled some fresh stories from very well known bike touring personals. Tim Travis, American world tour cyclist widely known for this blog Down-TheRoad, vigorously traveling around the world more than 10 years. And just made his first trip to Bangladesh with his girl friend Gretchen. His experience in Bangladesh is versatile. His daily updates on facebook attract lots of other world tour cyclists too. "It was an eye-opening experience for us" it was an

easy quote from him regarding Bangladesh. In Trino, we have compiled some of Gretchen's day by day journal with photos. They are in India now.

Graham is also a veteran bike traveler. First I got to know him from his mail, explaining his interest in Bangladesh. Taiwan based Brit has an amazing blog on Crazyguyonabike. His laptop got stolen from his hotel and very interestingly he found it back. His whole trip log is more like an epic touring journal. Due to space limitation we could accommodate few photos and very brief of his Bangladesh voyage. He is riding in Morocco now.

Rick is our friend. Well, yes, he has a pretty big mouth about Bangladesh! He liked it, that's the fact. This Californian is a big time fan of Md. Yunus. His blog got popularity with a name "Soul Cycler". Here we have his Bangladesh's experience – Bangladesh: Beauty within.

A tale of adventure cycling – high adventure on bike in Himalaya. Brain explains his journey across Himalaya on his custom built MTB. Brain is crazy! If not, he would not plan for Arctic to Argentina on bike. His early day's obsession and bike admiration gets a

stage even after his busy schedule in a full time teaching job in Korea! Finally, we could put some information about legendary world tour cyclist Ramnath Biswas in this issue. Ramnath Biswas was born in a village named Baniachong which is located in Voinrab Bazar, Sylhet. He could ride around the world before World War II during the year 1931-1940. Reader will be amazed to know his life and very brief trip dispatches.

Touring on a bike is fun and more over it gives you a scope to explore more. And for a country like Bangladesh which is getting popularity as "Chapati Flat" country. It's easy too. Certainly foreign traveler will like this place for many reasons, one is people-pleasure and economical diversity but for us, locals, it will give us a scope to revisit same place again and again as every ride is not same as previous one by that one can never run out of new place to ride next.

So? Why not touring on a bike.

Shanti

Muntasir Mamun

Editor-in-Chief

Ki Lanka Hill Circle







Sri Lanka is mostly known for cricket & Adam's Peak. And needless to mention its decade prolonged civil war. Apart from these, Sri Lanka is a beautiful country. This ocean drop island is blessed with nature's immeasurable wealth & beauty. The country belongs to a class of one of the most beautiful South-East Asian countries. Elephant, snakes, gem stones and hundreds of miles of sandy beaches are only some of unforgettable possessions.

Colombo, Galle and Jaffna, are known cities of Sri Lanka within the last century for their history and cultural values. Colombo is the capital; Galle is the ancient port of Indian trade route; and Jaffna is an abandoned palace now.

From the capital, Colombo, we started our journey on 15th of November. 5:30 am, from the YMCA Hostel located on Bristol St where we started pedaling towards Galle. The roads were in an excellent condition, well maintained & sufficiently paved, adding a pleasure to our rides. The most enjoyable and amazing part was riding by the east side. It was an exhilarating feeling. We enjoyed the marine drive the most until we reached Hambantota. After which we prepared ourselves to enter into the YALA. There were a series of national parks waiting to welcome us. We were already aware about the husky elephants of Sri Lankan forests adding a little anxiety and tense. Surprisingly, an

incident happened when Muntasir and his Tandem partner Sharif were crossing an Elephant near by. The elephant started following them aggressively. They rushed with their bike to save their lives. The rest of us went through that part safely but were chased by stray dogs. We also hammered on our pedals with top gears to save our backs from the wild dogs. We were grateful that nothing worse took place.

After the forest, the roads were not in a great condition taking away that pleasure of our rides. Our panniers seemed to have unattached from every single jerk. But they did not as the strings kept those attached with the carrier pretty tight. Luckily, we didn't have to get off from our saddle to reassemble our panniers which saved a lot of time. However, it was a great learning experience that we achieved from each and every minute of our trip. But all of a

sudden I hear this terrible grinding noise coming out of my rear wheel and as I got off to check, I found that my carrier was out of order; it was the right side that was twisted into half. However, Muntasir fixed the issue with his talented mechanical skills and saved my trip from coming to an end.

We continued the ride after fixing my carrier but the road also continued to be as it was. It had pot-holes all over with a minimum of five pot-holes within one square feet. Each of them was three to four inches in diameter and a couple of inches deep. Felt like a road to disaster. It was rarely possible to make a safe way through there with a heavily loaded bike. . . We were carrying all our personal belongings and camping materials such as tents, sleeping bags and all other essential camping equipments making the panniers extremely heavy which was putting an immense pressure on the bikes.



We loved our bikes and they were the only means to reaching our final destination. Moreover, Mamun yai was riding the bike he borrowed from a very kind friend of us, Shakil yai. Because of which he was taking good care of it even more than his own panniers. But

unfortunately, he ended up getting some scratches on the bike which was unavoidable.

We had to take a vehicle to Jaffna from Kilinochchi. We felt a relief. Then I realized that cycling is the best way to see Sri Lanka. Travelling in a car, especially



sitting at the back of a pickup van is inviting a misery of bumping and jerking over pot-holed roads, as the car whirrs around the endless hairpin bends that the mountainous landscape offered. On a cycle, it is a true adventure of discovery by touching the soul of the island. By the

time we gained mileage on our bikes, through the country sides, Sri Lanka opened her mind blowing curves in front of us. The beauty made us fascinated to her more and more, on each and every preceding day.

On the way back to Jaffna to Colombo we took another bus to Anuradhapura because of the road condition. We were planning to start paddling from Anuradhapura. Bus dropped us at Anuradhapura according to our plan. It was almost mid-night then. We decided to wait until 4:30 am and then to start for Puttalam. So we fixed our bikes and got ready for the push. When we were waiting at the bus stop, some local people came to us and start talking to us.

They were asking who we were, where we came from and other questions which derived from their curiosity. When we said that we are heading to Puttalam, they became alarmed. They told us not to go over there at least 1 hour after sunrise because of elephants. The road connecting Anuradhapura and Puttalam, is highly dense with Elephants along its side ways. And it is truly risky. In the mean time local police man came to us and also requested to not to go even in the



morning. They suggested us to avoid that route if possible. And if it is not possible to avoid, requested us to skip that part by taking a vehicle.

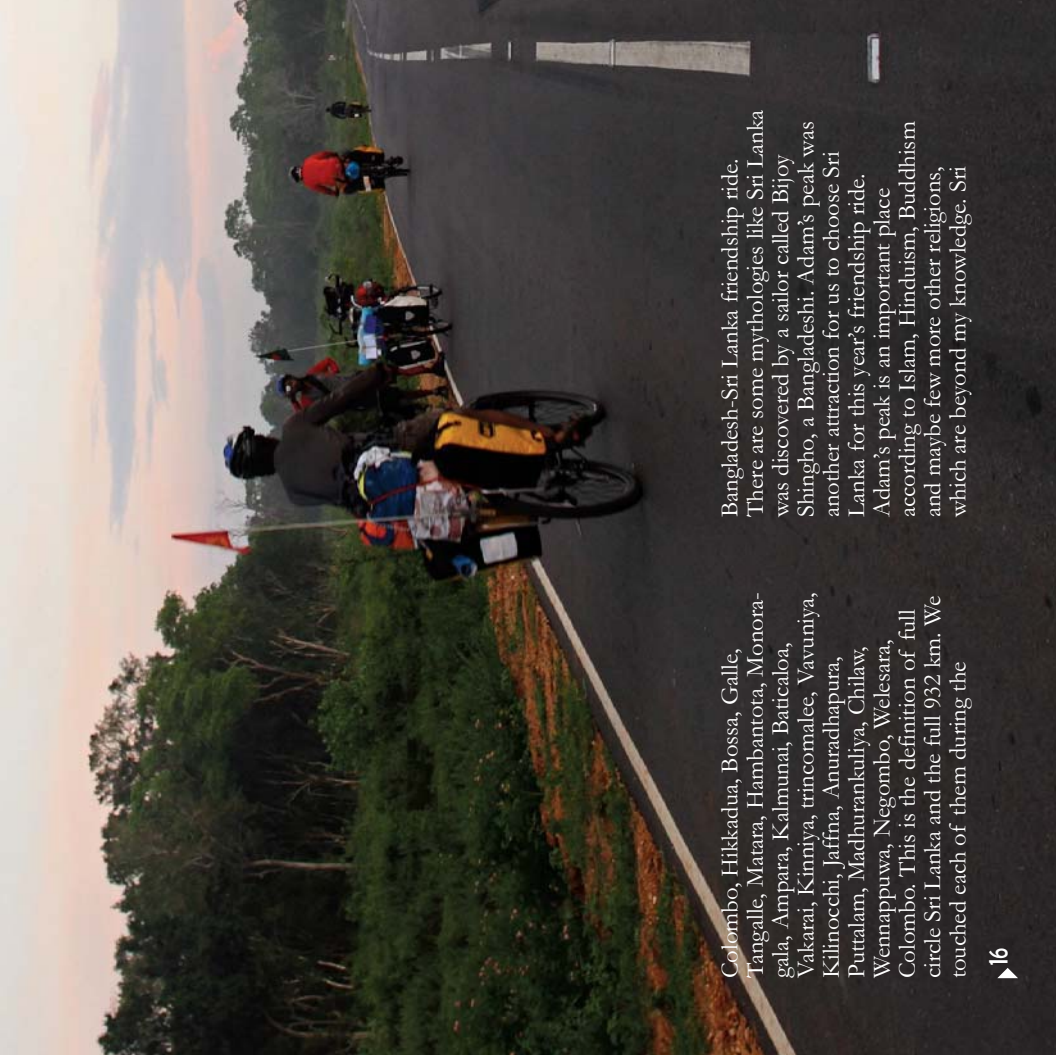
It was clear that traveling that part would be jeopardizing our lives as we don't even have any support car. Therefore, we decided to follow their suggestion and catch a bus to Puttalam. From Puttalam it was 144 km to Colombo. After reaching Puttalam, we decided to leave for Colombo the very same day. We were eager to meet Mr. Dewan Mahbub Alam who left us that night to catch his flight from Colombo which we were upset about. It's not a great feeling to complete the ride or to board a flight without a teammate, with whom we made our way up to this part. We were missing our teammate who

pedaled with us almost 800 km with an injury he sustained from the very first day. We just flew that 144 km to meet the person who accepted all the sufferings for more than a week, just to keep the team spirit intact. One thing I learned is that the success of an adventure, most importantly bike touring, depends upon team spirit. Until then we rode for a friendship between two nations and at specific day we rode for our friend, for our teammate; to meet him, and bid farewell as he boarded the flight back to home.

Sri Lankans are very kind, polite and

courteous especially in the country sides after Galle. There are lots of times where we were invited by local residents to sit with them and share our views. They are pretty familiar with foreign tourists and it is their humbleness that they still enjoy welcoming more. We met school girls dressed in white with colorful ribbons in their neatly plaited hair, smiling bashfully, on our way. Most of the time they responded our waves back. The colorful sari of beautiful ladies reflects their charming life styles. As per our experiences we come to know that they are not very rich in term of government report about GDP but they have their own land to have a nice little home and their minimum income is enough for them to lead their lives. They work, they eat, they love, they enjoy and they sleep. This is the simple equation they follow.

Sri Lankans are fond of spices and a new addition to their food habit is fried meal. Fried meal means fried rice, fried veggies & fried meat - everything you can possibly imagine as food; they have a fried version of it. They are also dedicated fan of coconut. There was always a dish made of coconut in the menu that we have been offered. After having the local food every night, we figured out that they balance the spice with the coconut in their stomach, a balanced diet.



Colombo, Hikkadua, Bossa, Galle, Tangalle, Matara, Hambantota, Monoragala, Ampara, Kalmunai, Baicaloa, Vakara, Kinniya, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Kilinocchi, Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Puttalam, Madhurankuliya, Chilaw, Wennappuwa, Negombo, Welesara, Colombo. This is the definition of full circle Sri Lanka and the full 932 km. We touched each of them during the

Bangladesh-Sri Lanka friendship ride. There are some mythologies like Sri Lanka was discovered by a sailor called Bijoy Shingho, a Bangladeshi. Adam's peak was another attraction for us to choose Sri Lanka for this year's friendship ride.

Adam's peak is an important place according to Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and maybe few more other religions, which are beyond my knowledge. Sri




Lanka is world famous for their gem stones as well. And this business is being dominated by the Muslim merchants of the society. But in spite of all these facts, in this post war era, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims all live in peace together as Sri Lankan nationals in their own country. We were five there. Muntasir Mamun, Mr. Dewan Mahbub Alam, Md. Shariful Islam, Mahmud Ullah (Videographer) and me,

Md. Shakhawat Chowdhury. When we were planning for Sri Lanka, everyone was tensed because of the news we hear every day about the nations' internal conflicts. Though the war is over and the country is now in peace for last couple of years, people are still not sure about their safety when traveling there. We are really grateful to Mr. D.H.N. Piyadigama, Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Dhaka.



He assured us about our safety as per the present peace condition in his country. His humbleness at the flag ceremony inspired us to bring the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka friendship ride to a successful finish line. We are thankful to him from the bottom of our heart. Additionally, we would like to convey our deep appreciation to the very kind High Commissioner of Bangladesh in Colombo and to Mr. Akram, the first secretary of Bangladesh High Commission, for their never repayable help from receiving us to dropping us off at the airport. They also arranged an



official press conference at the first floor of the High Commission in Ward Place, Colombo, prior to starting our ride. We would also like to thank the press personalities who attended the conference. Mr. A.A.M. Rifithi Ali and his trainee (Tamil Mirror/ Daily Mirror), Mrs. Sanara, (Editor of a local news paper), Mrs. Nishari (Editor of a local tabloid) some others whom we, regrettably, cannot recall the names.

Especially Mr. Sriman, for his valuable information about the

snakes in the northern part of the island, though it was intimidating but added an excitement to know that Sri Lanka is the land of Vipers. “Maximum number of Vipers in the world could be found here.” - I still feel chills through my spine when I recall these words that he uttered after the press conference.

Then he added, “... but you don't worry, just stay vigilant.” Thanks Mr. Sriman. And we got the proof when we saw at least two shredded snake's skins on the road in each kilometer. From 20/25 feet behind it looks like a piece of nylon rope. But when it comes beneath the front wheel, the fact appears that it is (exactly was) a snake skin as they are known to shed off skin. We even faced some live ones.

Almost all of them were in early mornings, while they were crossing the road. After a certain time it lost the excitement. And we stopped avoiding the dead/smashed ones on the road-. Then we were only conscious about the live ones. Truly, it was life threatening but yet an exciting experience.

We are also thankful to the van driver who took us to Jaffna. He searched the whole Jaffna city along with us for couple of hours to find the most suitable accommodation for us. Thanks Mr. Prokash and his friend.

Thanks to Mamun vai, Bitu vai and Noman vai, the three owner of Vromon Shorgee. And lastly we are thankful to our own friends and families who make us to believe that we can do it. And I'm thankful to my teammates to make this happen.




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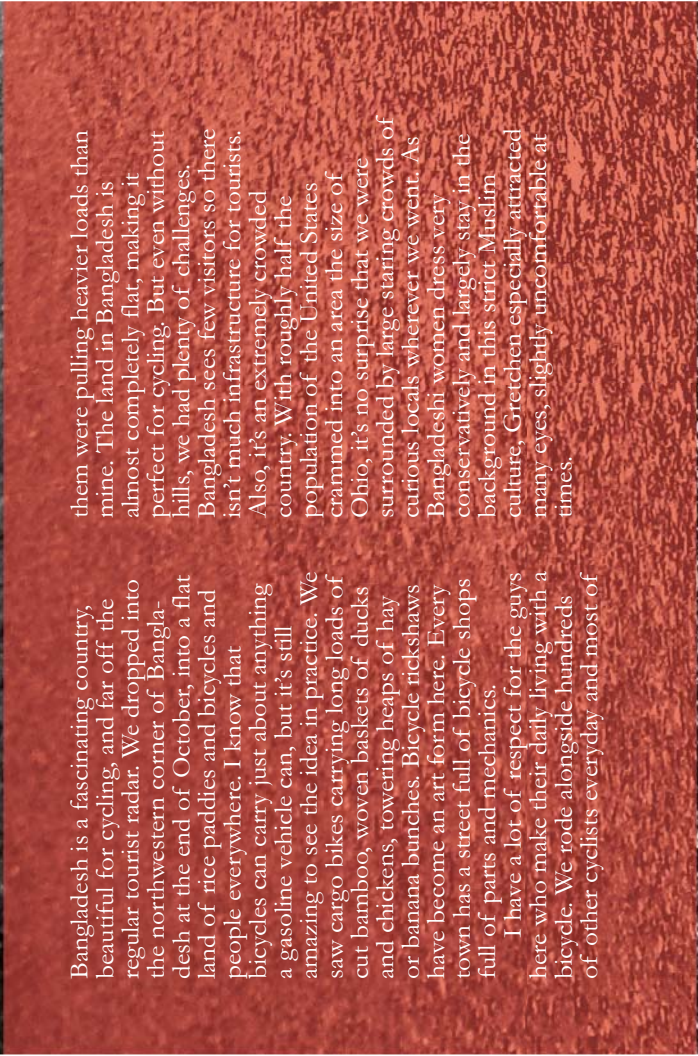
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Bangladesh is a fascinating country, beautiful for cycling, and far off the regular tourist radar. We dropped into the northwestern corner of Bangladesh at the end of October, into a flat land of rice paddies and bicycles and people everywhere. I know that bicycles can carry just about anything a gasoline vehicle can, but it's still amazing to see the idea in practice. We saw cargo bikes carrying long loads of cut bamboo, woven baskets of ducks and chickens, towering heaps of hay or banana bunches. Bicycle rickshaws have become an art form here. Every town has a street full of bicycle shops full of parts and mechanics.

I have a lot of respect for the guys here who make their daily living with a bicycle. We rode alongside hundreds of other cyclists everyday and most of



them were pulling heavier loads than mine. The land in Bangladesh is almost completely flat, making it perfect for cycling. But even without hills, we had plenty of challenges. Bangladesh sees few visitors so there isn't much infrastructure for tourists. Also, it's an extremely crowded country. With roughly half the population of the United States crammed into an area the size of Ohio, it's no surprise that we were surrounded by large starting crowds of curious locals wherever we went. As Bangladeshi women dress very conservatively and largely stay in the background in this strict Muslim culture, Gretchen especially attracted many eyes, slightly uncomfortable at times.



Language was one of our main obstacles. We'd come to take for granted the ease with which Indians speak English. Not the case in Bangladesh. There was no such thing as a street sign in English script. Still, people in Bangladesh are amazingly kind and helpful. On the many occasions when we were lost, all we had to do was pause at a corner. In the crowds that quickly closed in, one or two more educated people, eager to communicate and help us out, would materialize. Often our rescuers would guide us to our destinations and stick around to help us negotiate a fair price. From our first day to our last, nearly everyday we had people offering to help us find hotels, order at restaurants or get on correct train. Navigation by map alone was tricky business in Bangladesh, so we were lucky to get so much help. Especially

during our attempts at riding off the main highways, we frequently found ourselves on roads that bore no relation to the lines on the map. We pieced together a zig zag route across the northern half of Bangladesh to the tea plantations of Srimongal, the only hills of our trip. From there we loaded the bikes on a train to Chittagong and then cycled south to the beach at Cox's Bazar. After a small break, we took a bus back to Dhaka to meet Muntasir Mamun, a local cyclist who hosts many touring bikers passing through his country. Waiting for me at his house: a package sent by my parents in Indiana. Replacements for all the gear I'd lost along road in the last few months. After the stolen bag in Sikkim and various breakdowns, it was a huge relief to replace my most vital equipment and tools.

Although we spent an unhappy chunk of our last couple weeks in the country dealing with frustrating bureaucracy, (Always get an India visa in your home country whenever possible!) Muntasir and his family looked after us like royalty. We met an exciting group of outdoor adventure enthusiasts and social businessmen. When we finally picked up Gretchen's new Indian visa, we only had a short time left on our Bangladeshi visas. On the day we cycled out of Dhaka, a cold snap fell over Bangladesh and parts of India. In the much chillier than normal temperatures, locals bundled up in blankets and scarves and we pulled out our cold weather gear from the bottom of our bags for the first time in months.

We took a shivery ferry ride one morning across the Ganges River and back for a final pass through the

Bangladeshi fields and farmlands. The flat countryside here is beautiful riding and I love interacting with local bike riders on their rickshaws and cargo bikes. But our visas were running out and we had to cycle hard for a few days. As a Christmas treat, we stayed at a hotel with hot water and the next day crossed the Indian border. Although we were a few days passed our expiration date, the passport officer forgot to add up the exact number of days when he somehow became convinced that my wife was pregnant. I don't know how he got the idea that I was married or anyone was pregnant, but in the excitement of congratulating me, he neglected to fine us for overstaying.

After a few days of navigating the surrounding sprawl, we peddled into the heart of Kolkata. Third time's a charm. This time around we found much to enjoy in this mega-city as we celebrated the New Year with an international crowd of backpackers and travelers at a rooftop party. Although I rang in 2011 with a similar crowd in Pokhara, Nepal, the circumstances couldn't have been more different. As anyone who's gone through divorce can attest, things look a lot better after a year to recover.

We wanted to begin the next leg of our tour from Jaipur in Western India. Rather than cycling for two months through the fattest chunk of India, we decided to take a 24-hour train ride across the country. Checking the bikes and packs on the baggage car involved having our possessions sewn up in burlap and tarps and hoisted around with hand-held hooks. A bout of food poisoning did nothing to improve the ride, as vomiting and diarrhea are even less fun on a long train ride. But soon enough it was all over. I'm excited about this ride through the Rajasthan desert. We will head southwest to the westernmost Indian state of Gujarat to the Arabian Sea Coast, then circle back northeast towards the Himalayas and Nepal. It's not easy to plan a bicycle tour in India with the monsoon rains, winter and summer weather, and visa time restrictions to take

into consideration. I think I've got a trip worked out that won't require any planes, buses or train travel for a good long time. For anyone considering a trip to Bangladesh, whether by bike or other transport, know that it is harder traveling than India and Nepal, but still a rewarding place to visit. It's an interesting glimpse into Muslim culture. Bangladesh is probably the poorest country I've ever visited. It's one thing to hear in the news that there are people in the world who live US\$1 a day, quite another thing to see it in real life. Although sometimes heartbreaking, it was an eye-opening experience for us.





Let's Make Cancer

Masuk Ahmed

Cancer is a global crisis now a day. Each year millions of died because of cancer. It is harmful than Malaria or HIV/Aids. The burden of cancer doubled globally between 1975 and 2000. It is estimated that it will double again by 2020 and nearly triple by 2030. This translates to far greater numbers of people living with - and dying from - the disease. Low- and middle-income countries will feel the impact of higher cancer incidence and death rates more sharply than industrialized countries. The projected numbers for the year 2030 are 20-26 million new diagnoses and 13-17 million deaths. The growing cancer burden includes global increases of incidence of about one percent each year, with larger increases in China, Russia, India and Bangladesh . Reasons for the increased rates include adoption of Western habits in less developed countries, such as tobacco use and

History

Kewkradong Bangladesh Presents

higher-fat diets, and demographic changes, including a projected population increase of 38 percent in less developed countries between 2008 and 2030. In addition to increases in cancer incidence and death rates, the report identifies challenges in cancer care, especially in Africa, where pain management and palliative care are very limited because any use of narcotics is prohibited by law in several countries.

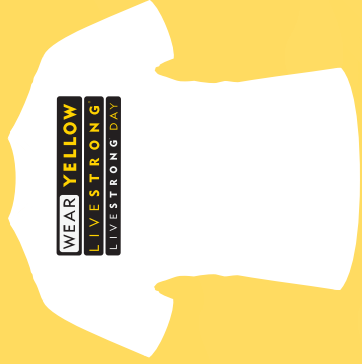
Global Cancer Statistics:

Cancer is projected to become the leading cause of death in 2010. Cancer currently claims nearly 8 million lives around the world each year. Cancer takes more lives than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. 12 million people around the world will be diagnosed with cancer in 2009, 28 million people around the world are living with cancer. One-third of all cancer incidents are preventable and



one-third are treatable with early detection and proper resources

Cancer Awareness Campaign:
Kewkradong Bangladesh celebrates
LIVESTRONG Day—an annual
global day of action to bring aware-
ness to the global cancer crisis.
October 2 marks the 14th anniversary
of Lance Armstrong's cancer
diagnosis and the day he entered the
cancer community.







RICKGUMN
and the Beauty of WISHLIN

"My friend, you and I shall remain strangers unto life, and unto one another, and each to himself until the day when you shall speak and I listen deeming your voice my own voice; and when I shall stand before you thinking myself standing in front of the mirror."

--Kahlil Gibran

I was nothing.

A nobody. Visible to all, yet familiar to none.

A gangly-white madman, pedaling with sweaty determination across India's sub-continental delta-lands.

With nothing to think of but time, and nothing but time to think, I was thumping through the chapters of my life, when I noticed a pattern. Cyclical periods of time when everything about me, and my life felt wrong. Usually triggered by some meaningless setback, or delusional self-interpretation, many had been the time when I'd stripped myself of all things worthy, only to plunge, naked and cold, into an infinitive sea of hopelessness. But then, usually as I'd concluded all was lost, I'd watch as something bigger intervened. Some inexplicable experience, observation, or interpersonal connection that re-revealed the beauty of self, and those shimmering rays of inner-light that illuminate the world from the inside out.

While many would be quick to label this experience: God, love, fate or transcendence.

This time around I'd call it simply Bangladesh.

Rolling with palpable-expectancy across Bangladesh's northern border, I was instantly engulfed by its seemingly limitless spans of rice: golden waves of grain framed by coconut, banana, and bamboo.





Near the outer edges of the crops, villages appeared in clusters, thatched-roof dwellings built of grass, mud and tin. In the spaces in between, children danced, laughed, and played.

Men and oxen worked the fields, joined by women in brightly colored saris. All of them nurturing the soil as they had for a millennia.

And while those back home browsed the isles of Safeways, Costcos, and Waldmarts, 63 percent of all Bangladeshis still fed themselves directly from the earth.

But for however hard they worked, the villagers were never too busy to stop, smile or wave. And although their skin took the tone of rich dark chocolate, inside they too were golden.

Whenever I stopped, they gathered in droves.

The simple truth was that most had never seen a foreigner, let alone a six-foot, six-inch white man. Using my stopwatch, I calculated that my presence attracted an average of 60-80 gawkers a minute. Triple that in cities.

In fact, it was not unusual to have thirty to fifty people standing around me at any given time, staring in astonishment as I ate an apple, picked my nose, or took a sip of water.

All of it came to a head that first afternoon as I peeing behind a tree.

© Rick Gunn



When I zipped-up my fly, I turned to discover a crowd of nearly a hundred. Their curious stares locked on me like laser-beams. It was then that I developed a new strategy about stopping. This was not to. Or, if I absolutely had to, to perform whatever task I'd needed: eating, drinking, photographing or peeing--in thirty seconds or less.

Needless to say, I made record time to the first city of Patnam.

Enjoying my first moments of privacy in a small hotel, I laid my head to rest.

There, above the rhythmic threshing of rice, I heard my first evening prayers from a Mosque.

With them, came a flood of thought. Having long-since dropped the fears of Islam sweeping my homeland, I cringed when I thought of those who still gathered their impressions of the Islamic world from a slew of post-911 pop-novels, and 10-second sound-bytes that over-represented the religious fringe.

Reportage that all but ignored the vast majority of decent, kind hearted, family-oriented Muslims. If there was one thing that this journey had taught me it was this: that out of the 17 countries I had visited, the Muslim states were undoubtedly the friendliest, and the most welcoming. I awoke the next day, and loaded my bike in the hotel lobby. In

the moments that it took, I drew a crowd of thirty. I held my breath, pushed my bike through the doorway, then pedaled-out into the crowd. As I did, it sent electric-waves of excitement through the mass, causing them to point, hoot and howl.

I bolted quickly toward the countryside, to a quiet dirt-road, I was lost in the silence when a voice startled me from behind. "Hey!...Bondhui" (friend!), "Where are you going?" I turned my head to meet the eyes of a nine-year-old boy. He was dressed sharply, and riding on an over-sized Indian bicycle.

"Huh?" I asked.

"Where are you going?" he repeated in perfect English.

"Oh, uh... Shariakandi." I replied dumbfounded.

"What is your name bondhui?"

"Rick." I replied.

"Hello Mr. Reeki, my name is Milton!" he said proudly, and we rode together for the next few miles.

In the course of that time he asked all the questions he could muster.

"Reek," he asked finally, "Would you like to come to my village and see my house?" I hesitated for a moment, then said, "Yes Milton,...ofcourse I would."

We turned from the street, down a twisted footpath dissected a row of crops, through a group of trees, until we reached the doorstep of his small village dwelling

Constructed of dirt, mud and straw, the simple structure had a tin roof, no windows, and a half-dozen chickens, clucking around the yard. Sitting in front was an elderly woman. Reaching for her hand, I noticed her skin--her entire body covered in dark bumps and sores. When my eyes met hers, I could see the life-light slowly dimming inside her.

"This is my mother!" Milton smiled, looking through the disease with a single vision of love. "Come!" he shouted, "I want to show you the inside of my house!"

There upon a bed, above the smooth-dirt floor, a man lay sleeping. As I approached, he opened his eyes. "This is my brother!" Milton said beaming, blinding me again with the gleam of his smile.

Returning outside after mere seconds, I came to find the entire village, a crowd of perhaps fifty, waiting, standing, staring--curiously ogling the tall-white stranger.

Milton looked at the growing crowd, then back at me, his smile now burning with the brilliance of a million suns. "This is my Village!" he announced, as if his latest show and tell project had just earned him village-kid of the year.

The crowd made me nervous. I leaned over and whispered in his ear. "Sorry Milton, but I gotta go."

"Ok Mr. Reek!" he said, flashing another of his stellar smiles, and I placed my hand in his. "Thank you Milton." I said sincerely.

"Goodbye Mr. Reek." he said, and I rode away.

A few miles later, as I'd returned to the silence of the countryside, the magnitude of that simplistic experience crept from within. However simple it seemed, the truth was, two people from opposite ends of the planet had transcended race, religion, culture and creed. And if only for a moment, became one.

And with that, it felt as if some long-forgotten seed had been watered within, as if my life regained purpose after a long-dark winter.

That afternoon, after traveling by boat across the Jamuna River Delta, then horse and buggy across an un-rideable stretch of sand, I reached the town of Jamalpur. A day-and-a-half later, I cycled the long-flat stretch of pavement 90 miles south of Mysersingh and rode straight into the madness within the heart of Dhaka.

Let there be no mistake about it, Dhaka was the mother of them all.

Forget about Jakarta, Delhi or Calcutta, Dhaka is a city that grabs you by the brain and rips it out by the roots. A city gone berserk. As if by the swing of a

hammer, someone had partially split an atom, the result of which produced a shock-wave comprised almost entirely of rickshaws. Six-hundred-thousand of them moving in every direction. Motorcycles, bicycles and busses joined the chaos. And at the exact moment I reached town, I watched two busses collide.

As glass rained from their windows, I looked intently at both bus drivers, certain there was going to be a fight. But then, in a strange twist of fate, their faces softened. One waved, the other smiled. Each viewing the collision as something of a vehicular pat on the shoulder. This in a city where Insurance simply meant thicker layers of sheet-metal.

After cycling a snarling tangle of traffic to the inner-city, I stopped for a moment to observe a small herd of goats peering down at me from a third story apartment balcony. As I did, my attention was pulled back by a boy tugging on my arm. In front of him, in a rickety home-made cart, was what looked like his older brother. His body defeated and eyes rolling back into his head.

As I pulled back into traffic, I became certain the breaths I'd watched him struggle with, were some of his last. Then came the people.



Bangladesh was the most densely populated country in the world. And nowhere was that more apparent than Dhaka. With a population of 140 million people living in an area 57 times smaller than Australia, 25% of those had now moved to Bangladesh's cities in hopes of

finding jobs. Dhaka was bursting at the seams. The homeless filled the streets. Hundreds of them. Entire families taking their sleep each night in parking lots, sidewalks and road medians. Joining them were armies of the limb-less, those missing every conceivable body part, or



ravaged by some disfiguring disease. Each driven by the most basic instinct to survive, they pushed, pulled or drug their twisted bodies into the center of the city, only to thrust themselves upon the mercy of others in a virtual case of do or die. More than once I witnessed the latter,

their lifeless bodies gently lifted into a truck, and sung prayers of blessing, before it drove away. Pollution, grit and smog filled the air, and attacked my lungs, filling them like vacuum-cleaner bags. I wasn't the only one.



For four days, I watched as others hawked and coughed, endlessly spitting-up pasty lung-fluid. Cycling made it worse, and before it was done with me, Dhaka's airborne particulate would induce a full-blown respiratory infection. An infection that would eventually have me coughing-up blood.

Meanwhile I kept pedaling, struggling my way to the center of the city. I felt as if I was drowning. Gurgling my last breaths in the deep-sea of pandemonium. Just when I thought I was about to collapse and implode, I again pulled to the side. As usual, a crowd gathered like thunderheads, drilling at my brain with their impenetrable stares. One of them approached from behind, and asked, "Which country?"

I'd had enough.

I turned my gaze at him with eyes of fire.

"Sir.. I said through clenched teeth, "if you stopped to practice your English with me, I assure you I have no time for that now!"

"Actually," he replied in perfect English, "I'm a photojournalist for the Dhaka Daily Newspaper. I got a photo of you and I was hoping to get your name."

I felt like a complete ass.

Here was the Bangladeshi version of myself, just trying to do his job, and the best I could do was sass him.

"Can you tell me where the Al Razzaque Hotel is in old town?" I asked desperately. "Follow me," he replied, and within seconds I was chasing his motorcycle through town. Ten minutes later we reached my hotel. "My name's Zia," he said reaching for my hand. "Ritek." I said casting my eyes to the ground. When I returned them I said, "Look man, I'm sorry for snapping at you back there, its just that..." "No problem," he said cutting me off, then changed the subject. "Is there something I can help you with while you're here? Would you like me to show you around the city?"

"Uh...yes." "Good," he said, "I'll see you here tomorrow at four." then helped me with my bags before he sped away. What I couldn't have known standing in that hotel lobby, was that I'd just met one of the kindest men in all of Bangladesh.

The next morning, after tending to money and visas, I was returning from one of Dhaka's upper-crust neighborhoods, when my eyes were caught by a strange scene. There, tucked behind the opulence, was a waterside slum. Corrugated tin-shacks hidden behind a row of up-scale apartments. I hiked in to get a better look.

When I reached the slum, I came upon a boy playing on a carpet of refuse. He stopped and smiled. Behind him two tiny girls sipped from the industrially-polluted waters. I stared at the scene for a moment.

Then my mind reeled-back to the images I'd watched on my hotel TV that morning.

Images from back home.

Images of weight-loss programs. Images of food critics turning their nose up to the finest foods. Images of people driving the biggest cars, boasting the largest homes, or "being seen" in their thousand dollar clothes.

When my attention came back to the moment, my eyes were captured by another image. It was that of a family picking edible weeds on the banks of a garbage-strewn lagoon. A few extra precious calories in a country where 48% of all children are underweight for their age.

As I walked away from the scene, I wondered just how long this imbalance would go on. How much longer those who had it all, could turn their eyes away from those who did not. I wondered just who in the world would care enough about these people to make a difference.

A day later, with a little help from Zia, I found just that man.

Dr. Mohammad Yunus.

Zia introduced us and I shook his hand.

Yunus had gained world-notoriety structuring a loan program that offers financial resources to poor, landless people--lending to groups of 5 neighbors who then lean upon each other to keep

good on the payments. Of the five, Yunus encourages the females of the group to steward the funds, with the intent of empowering women within this male-dominated society. Through this loan-program, Yunus has enabled a third of all Bangladeshis to pull themselves across the poverty line. A loan program which is now gaining interest in impoverished countries around the world. After I raised my camera and made an image, he smiled, said thank you, then walked away.

The next day Dr. Mohammad Yunus would fly to Oslo Norway to receive the Nobel-Prize for Economics.

Zia and I finished our time in Dhaka, talking about life, love, politics and religion. Eventually, as I knew it would, the conversation turned to America, it's current perception of Muslims, and Bangladesh.

"We are not terrorists...Zia said of his people "pulling the statement like a thorn from his heart." He turned his eyes back towards mine and said intently, "But the truth is, if you spend the next twenty years calling us that, perhaps thats what we will be."

"The conversation twisted and turned, Zia finally asked, "How long will you be away from home on this journey, and don't you miss your family?" "I was suppose to be home after two years, but after my dog died, I may stay out a little longer."

"Your dog?" he said confounded, adding, "This is why I have no desire to be like Americans... You away from your family for 2 years and all you can think about is your dog?" Then he added, "My mother calls me every morning."

"Actually Zia," I said, my eyes meeting his, "I am not like other Americans." "My mother died when I was young, in the midst of an ugly divorce, and I guess it...well, I'm guess I'm just different." His eyes seem to back-pedal, softening into that of compassion. He put his hand on my arm and said, "Rick, I am sorry."

Days later, riding on the back of Zia's

motorcycle, our conversation still burned within my brain. And just as I'd concluded my life to be one giant scar, Zia turned his head and spoke.

"On your website, it says your mother died of a liver disease?"

"Yes." I replied, "Why do you ask?" My question left him silent. After a few moments he turned his head back again and said, "My mother also has a liver disease--Hepatitis C. Doctors say that at 60, there is not much they can do."

His admission landed on my heart like a ton of bricks, and a small tear rolled from



my eye. A tear for the future, a tear from the past.

"I'm sorry," I said, putting a hand on his shoulder, "I am so very sorry."

A day later, when it was time to go, I wrapped my arms around him, and said goodbye. "Thank you my friend, I will never forget you." I whispered as we held.

And for that moment we were not Muslims or Buddhist, Americans, nor Bangladeshis. We weren't photographers, or journalists, but together we were one.

A few hours later, I hopped on a plane to Bangkok. And as the plane took off, I looked-out over the madness of Dhaka shrinking before me. Then I thought of Zia.

Then I opened a book and came upon another Bengali Nobel-Prize winner. The Poet Rabindranath Tagore. Deeply moved by his work, I came upon these words:

"Where your arms are outstretched to us all, it is there my love is awakened. Love knows no hiding-place, it spreads like rays. You are the joy of all, O Beloved. It is that joy I claim as mine."

Legend
of the
man



Ramath Biswas

who wheeled
before WWII

muntashi & shrafuzzaman

It will be hard to find someone who can help you with some information on Ramnath Biswas. Yes even if we google it, there will be few lines from couple of websites saying - Bengali traveller who travelled around the world on his bi-cycle. That's it, nothing more. So it was difficult to get access to the information even though we are living at the time when wikileaks exists. No, Ramnath Biswas (RaBi) was not someone who will slip from our global knowledge called internet

ner from Wikipedia. This story is all about a Bengali traveller who travelled around the world between first and Second World War.

The East has many legends on travelling. Since the birth of Atisha Dipakara till today, may be not always by any native but yes, travellers from the world. In that sense if we say the Ganges delta could ever produce a traveller, then certainly RaBi is one of the shining stars of all time. And very surprisingly he travelled the world on his bi-cycle back in 1931-1940 for long nine years in three phases.



Ramath Biswas's
traveled path*

*not to scale



RaBi was born in the year of 1894 on January 13. His father was a strict Brahmin and gained respect for his notable social work and his mother used to spend most of her time at the neighbouring temple of Shiva. Even today if we visit his birth place, we can find the temple and his ancestors in the village called Baniachong. Yes, as we all know the name for being the largest village of Bangladesh (and also of the world) but never heard of Rammath's name after the village.

Historically Baniachong will be in the district of Sylhet of Bangladesh. Even at the time of Rammath's birth, Baniachong had 40 thousand inhabitants along with large Hindus and minority Muslim.

RaBi lost his mother at very early of his life, when he was only two and suffered from typhoid and diarrhoea due to improper childhood caring. He became weak physically at that age. During early days' schooling he lost his father. So this unexpected death (after his mother and father within very short time of his birth) even one started blaming him. So he never could gain love after his father's departure. Since then he learnt to survived as – you came to the earth, alone; live alone.

As we knew Baniachong was having a large community of Hindus

and Muslim and like hundred years back, both of the religion has a tension in between and were very strict on their religious norms and castes. But RaBi, used to mix with everyone, he even got habituated with Beef and Pork which was impossible even to think at that time. So it was very likely society ditched him. He got abandoned from both sides at his village.

During the time of WWI he started his life as an Officer at Bengal Labour core. But he could not survive long as he was not physically fit for long time race. He got discharged as he was below 100 pounds. But he never left hope of joining the core again. He got back and joined in commissioned core in 1917.

RaBi experts say, it was the eye opening year for RaBi when he was in the military. He had to travel extensively in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was 1918 and we can imagine the road condition of those unexplored territories when no aero plane was there to lift heavy artillery. They had to march almost 30 miles a day on a regular basis. But he was enjoying it as the scope of seeing the new. He got fascinated with that, even though his health deteriorated and caused malaria again. As a result he was discharged again. This time he returned home with a strong desire of travelling the world

in September of 1924. But life pulled him in another direction for living. He became a miner in Singapore, later on a supervisor of a marine court as his knowledge on English, Malay, Chinese and Hindi language were fluent. This is true he was never an explorer or a traveller by genes but seeing marine life and its diversity in Singapore port, he started admiring it. With the passage of time his admiration started to gain at the level of fascination. He quit the job at the age of 35, by that time he could save some money to jump in to travelling on his bi-cycle (may be the habit of walking and seeing everything from walking distance got him an idea of taking a cycle rather than travelling by any other means. Editor's note.)

A day to celebrate!

July 7th, 1931 and it was Tuesday. Ramnath will depart from Queens street. So in front of Bengali mosque there were hundreds of thousands of local spectators where gathered to the voyage. He never thought it will pull such a crowd instead of few of his very close! According to Ramnath, "It was like an humming in the air 'Allahu-Akbar' more lauder than 'Vandemataran'. He enjoyed it and gave him courage to travel hard while his cycle was holding a triangular banner having written 'Hindu Traveller'. He learnt his lesson from the crowd. Nothing but

the person and achievement is important than any other thought like religion!

At that time no one ever thought of starting such adventure. There is hundreds of reason but almost certainly finance was an issue. Moreover, from India, visa or travel permits was hard since the visa system indented. So it was not smooth for him either even though his voyage as a mentoring one. A book for autograph, a mosquito net and long cloths were in his box fitted on the rear wheel rack. Actually it was a wooden box along with some very pragmatic bike repairing tool. And yes no money either! He believed a philosophy, if he had money, it will be hard to meet more people on the path. He doesn't have money; he will be bound to meet people for his own survival. On the philosophy he has written a book too – Round the world without money! Out of his travelled countries, he loved China more than anywhere else. In 1931, after crossing over Malaysia (Kualalumpur, xitra, Chianglung) and Thailand, he followed Indo-China towards China and then Peking. This city was on his favourite list. From Peking he pedal through Manchou Mukden and boarding city Antong reroute to Korea then he sailed to Kobe, Japan from there on September 5, 1932.

After visiting Japan he intended to travel to Canada and sailed again from Japan. But at the immigration, he was jailed for more than 30 days as he had no money to satisfy custom. On that time, Vancouver Sun published a special supplement on his voyage,

Cyclist Thwarted: Hindu Youth Wheels Around the World.

Ramnath Biswas, a Hindu youth with ambition to cycle around the world alone and make the trip pay for itself, may be disappointed and unhappy at what happened to him in Vancouver, but he was determined to keep on going, even if not Canada or the United States. Upon arriving at Vancouver on Sunday from Japan on the Heian-Maru, he ran into difficulties with immigration authorities of two countries.

Neither Canada nor USA would let him proceed east or south on his bicycle, the official explanation being that he was unable to comply with immigration requirements and there was no assurance of him being able to continue his journey to some other land.

Ramnath Biswas had decided to take ship to Panama and ride his wheel through Central and South America. Perhaps he may get back to Canada he said. This is his first trouble since he left

home, he declared and had records to show that he had been through the Malaya-peninsula, Siam, Indo-china, China, Manchuria, Korea, Japan and planned to cross Canada.

He claims to have been the first man to make the journey from canton to Harbin by bicycle. He planned to cross Canada and take a boat to England. He left Singapore where was a clerk in the Marine Court on July 1931.

Claiming to have born a British subject — he did not quite understand why he is not allowed to cross Canada. Vancouver Hindus, he states, have endeavoured to raise cash to post a bond guaranteeing that he would not remain in Canada but he has decided to go to Panama. Meantime he was a guest of the immigration department at the Detention Building.

Well nothing worked at the end of the day. Ramnath got deported after 30 days and took a ship for Japan. But again, Japan refused to let him enter into their land like Canada did from port of Yokohama. Finding no other alternative he returned to China and pedalled again over Philippine, Bali, Java, Sumatra and many others and sailed to Singapore again. It was the end of his first round of world tour. Nonetheless he wheeled more than 29000 miles (Advance, June 15, 1934)

and recorded as mostly travelled Indian by far.

Yet again, he hit the road in January '33, starting from Burma, then Manipur, Shilong towards his own village Baniachong which is geographically placed in Bangladesh. This time he aimed to reach Europe and took the route touching Bihar, UP, Delhi, Gujarat, Punjab, Kashmir, Rawalpindi, Takkila then entering into Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon then Turkey. From Turkey he pedals thru Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Holland, Belgium and France. And during the late 1935 he reached at London from France via ferry and spending some time in Scotland and Ireland before sailing back to home again. That included nearly another 20000 miles of hardship on the wheel!

His last phase was in the Africa. After reaching Mombasa from India, he travelled North African state of Kenya, Lake Victoria, Uganda, Tanzania and following Rhodesia, Transvaal of South Africa, Durban and Cape Town.

Later on, he could travel to North America from there. He has written few books on his experience in America and sailed to Bombay in the early 1940. After that he did not start

his forth lap of riding!
If we sum up his last lap that will include another estimated 20000 miles of travel. If so, then it will be about 70,000 miles of bike ride before World War – II. Very interestingly bike guru, Heinz Stucke was born at the same year (1940), just eight months after Ramnath's voyage.



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Song
of the
LITTLE
ROAD

.....
graham finch



Things are slowly taking shape. At long last my 30-day visa for Bangladesh has arrived and I've just booked a flight to Dhaka, flying November 1st. It was more economic to buy a return and my flight back from Mumbai - India - is at the end of January, but who knows whether I'll be on it or not. After weeks spent gawping at maps and websites and reading books, my plan has evolved into a simple strategy of suck it 'n' sec. Bangladesh. Tourism. It's a fact that these two are rarely written in the same sentence. Predictably, and slightly reminiscent of that old chestnut about why men climb mountains, some of my students have been wondering aloud: Why go cycling around a place synonymous with floods and abject poverty? My answers haven't been particularly concise and replying 'because it's there' wouldn't be quite right, yet not too far wrong either. "I've not been before," is all I can muster.

Not too many others have ventured there either. The nation's image as a perennial disaster zone is compounded by the absence of iconic, photogenic places. Nevertheless, from what I've read to date, Bangladesh is a lush, understatedly gorgeous, mostly chapatti-flat country boasting a network of rural paths linking tiny villages that are home to some of


the friendliest people you could ever wish to meet. And let's face it - it's usually encounters with people that make a tour special. The odds are certainly stacked in my favor.

THERE ARE AROUND 160 MILLION BANGLADESHIS AND THEY LIVE IN AN AREA ABOUT THE SIZE OF IOWA. THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A SECOND. IT EQUATES TO HALF OF AMERICA'S POPULATION CRAMMED INTO THAT ONE US STATE, OR THE POPULATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES TRIPLED OVERNIGHT.

Yes, Bangladesh is crowded. So is Monaco. And Taiwan, where I've lived for the last 11 years - a country considered the world's second most densely populated. However, I've found that once out and away from the busy busy conurbations, there's lots of wonderful green countryside crisscrossed by peaceful routes. That's basically what I'll be looking for in Bangladesh: avoid the main arteries and instead seek out the little roads that meander through backwater places - hence my journal's title.







In case you didn't already know, I grabbed the name from a 1929 novel called Pather Panchali, a Bengali author Bibhutibhusan Banerji. Song of the Little Road isn't a true translation - it's impossible to translate exactly - and although the plot revolves around life in a tiny village and doesn't incorporate any traveling as such, the title seemed appropriate. It's a beautiful read; storytelling at its best. Seen through the eyes of young a brother and sister, Pather Panchali tells the story of a humble Bengali family's rural life, a family whose situation slowly drifts from bad to worse as they journey from poverty to tragedy via disaster and despair. But it's not all doom and gloom; far from it. Scattered within are great characters, whose hand-to-mouth existence has humbling joie de vivre flowing through it. Even if you're not planning on visiting India or Bangladesh, try to get hold of a copy. Alternatively, watch the movie. Indian director Satyajit Ray made a film version in 1955 and his low-budget debut is a masterpiece of cinematography. Do yourself a big favor and search eBay for a DVD of it. Or simply look for it featured on YouTube.

© Graham Finch

If you think they sound outdated - which, in my opinion, they're not - make do with following this journal. Armed with a camera, I'll be doing my best to capture the countryside. Perhaps you've worked out this is a solo tour. My wife Debbie briefly toyed with the idea of joining me for a month somewhere in India around Chinese New Year, which falls in early February. Then she changed her mind. Not to worry. Riding alone for a few months will be good. Bearing in mind where I'm flying to, the word 'alone' is used loosely. It'll be an experience. Yes, I'm still counting down - kind of wishing my life away, which is terrible - and there are another 50 odd days until departure. That's plenty of time for me to get some more reading done, do a bit of cycle-store shopping and have my bike checked over.

The sound is like a train whizzing through a tunnel and I wonder how I slept in my tent's mesh shell at all. The green fan rattles around and round and drowns out everything else. It's seven. I can get an early start. The desk is there in front of the window like it was last night after I shifted it from the side wall so I could use the power outlet near the door. My computer and peripherals must be stuffed back in their respective cases in a pannier. Strange how I can't recall doing that but it was gone 11 when

I posted my journal update last night, feelin' quite knackered and in auto-pilot mode I guess.

Nope. Not there. What did I do? No idea.

The door is still bolted; no one came in. The window has a steel grill on the inside. Then I notice - the window can slide open. It isn't locked. A hand could slide through it. Someone could pilfer that way - one of the crowds that followed me into the room at 3-ish yesterday, one of them who watched me edit my photos. Some bastard has nicked it. That's all I know. The ground floor entrance is padlocked so I can't exit the building. A prisoner. The irony isn't lost on me. I go back up the stairwell and walk onto the adjacent flat roof. At the back is a tree that leans against the parapet. That's where they got up. I was asleep. It was probably gone midnight.

The ceiling fan whizzing. Who would have thought.

I call out to people on the street. Two guys eventually come into the bungalow grounds. It's a farce. I gesture telephone and say 'police'. They offer up their cell phones. Like I know the number- even if my arm could reach down 10 feet to get them. Give me a break! Jeez. My voice

repeats the words, getting louder, as if that makes an iota of difference in either clarity on requirement. Maybe it does. I hey gesture for me to go downstairs to them. The entrance is locked and I gesture key. Then I give up.

They twig; one calls the police. No answer. I hey eventually find the 'key man'. Once in the yard, I reckon the police office must be central and


I WALK IN THAT DIRECTION, IMPATIENT FOR ACTION, STRIDING PURPOSEFULLY AND WITH ADRENALIN PUMPING. IT'S NOW NEARLY EIGHT.

The officer I meet is still in his longyi. Ten minutes later he's in uniform and we are on his motorbike going back the way I just strode and in the bedroom I show him the cleared desk - no computer, cordless mouse, pad, mains power cable or Grameenphone dongle - then walk out onto the flat roof and I point to the leaning tree. He knows.

He can speak some English but barks in local lingo at the 'key boy' who I saw last night when he came to the door at around nine or so with a police detective who said he just wanted to make sure I was okay. I never mentioned that last night. It wasn't important. Police arrive in a truck, armed with rifles. I hey are on a

mission. T he crowd at the bungalow's main gate is 50-strong now. All are curious but quiet. The chief comes. We chat. T he police officers all go after 20 or 30 minutes, except for one. He stands guard. Then the district CEO arrives on an entourage of staffers and hangers-on and God knows who - another 20 or so people discussing the 'key boy' and caretaker duties and booking policy, followed. Get real. The CEO or whatever she is authoritative while conciliatory to a point. I was just led here yesterday by a helpful local is all I can say. As if it makes a bit of difference to the outcome anyway. Some one stole my 'laptop', a word that's in the local vocabulary and one that I hear repeated alot among the jumble of conversations going on around me.

Eventually I am left alone. Just the one police officer guarding the gate - rifle held across his chest. He sees me. It seems ghostly quiet now. The chief has said he'll find the thief. He would say that though. When?... that's the point. All I want is my laptop back. I have some cycling I want to do, and a journal to update. . My bike needs a clean and that's what it gets, All that gunk and grime of dust and straw and whatever that's clogged in the cogs of the sprocket gets racked out.



I wipe the rims and the spokes and clean the frame with an old cotton T-shirt left by some previous guest and then play around with my bar-end which has got damaged - the treads stripped when I let the bike fall over. Weird that. I can't tighten the bolt now, obviously, so the

bar-end slips around - the one with my rear-view mirror on. Find a piece of aluminium with ACME stamped on it (it's a holder for a mozzate coil I later find out) on the wooden bedside cabinet in the room. Weird that. It seems just right, like I'd specify just such a piece. My Swiss

Army Knife scissors cut a tiny piece say
3mm by 10mm off and I slide it so
carefully into the bolt hole and insert the
bolt and it bites against this shim and
seems to work. Who would have thought.
Two women peek around the stairwell.
One around 40 and the other could be

her mother. She's weeping and rambling
and I have no idea what she is saying. Is
she sorry for me or is she the mother of
one of the young suspects that the police
have no doubt roped in. I will never
know.

I peruse the Bradt guide and look west on the map. The town of Borga beckons. I am struck here. At noon it's time to do something and carrying my camera I walk towards the station to get a progress report. The people in the town have transformed and there are no 'what's-your-country' questions or smiles or hellos and it simply feels like I'm ringing a bell and shouting 'unclean, unclean' like a

leper. The armed officer marching along with me doesn't help this negative vibe. But what are they all

they all thinking... maybe it's collective shame, remorse or some unfathomable feeling. I really have no idea; their blank facial expressions throw me completely.

The suspects - five - get brought into the chief's office where I'm sat with a cup of sweet tea in front of me - on his desk



- and I have my suspicions about one of these teens and let them be known but they are denied. By two o'clock the laptop has been found. Thirty minutes later, so has the other stuff. CSI doesn't come close. Gopalpur Police department kickass, quite literally I would say. Where was the stuff and who took it is never fully explained. I am a problem that the police want to resolve and the less fuss is made the better, as heads would no doubt roll if news of the crime reached up to the top of the chain of command and a posting to some remote hill tract outpost seems to me to be a dismal prospect to be avoided at all costs. It's just a case of 'case closed'; not that one was ever officially opened. I have my laptop back. I'm pleased. I he padded case is a bit dusty, as though it's been in a dry field, but everything works okay.

The culprit, I later find out, has downloaded some soft porn pictures and installed Yahoo Messenger. While all this was going on, one of the many people to walk through the police chief's seemingly revolving door is a guy named Mamun, someone who has lived in Southampton, England, since the late 90s and a kind embarrassed man who wants to help out. We go for lunch at his home and he kindly offers a bed for the night. It's three now - too late for cycling far. It's nice to be welcomed and speak English. His wife


cooks a fab meal. I'm treated to a massive pot of dory.

After, Mamud suggests we take a rickshaw back into the centre, less than kilometer away. Fine by me. We first call in at a busy tea shop and then sit behind the counter of a plumber's merchants that belongs to his close friend and drink several more cups of tea - some sweet and others black with ginger. People stop by and it seems everyone in Gopalpur knows about my laptop. Ey-er-ry-bo-dy. Really, I'm the talk of the town of 50,000 or so; the first foreigner that people can ever recall visiting. And as I suspected, they feel terrible about the theft. Once the steel shutters of the plumber's merchant are rolled down and padlocked, the three of us walk to a nearby tea shop for yet more tea. Some locals - all men - are sat huddled with scarves around their heads and focused on a small black and white T V set that is showing the day's strike action in Dhaka. It's a bit chilly tonight. I have a long-sleeve merino wool top and could do with my jacket. The consensus is I shouldn't ride due west tomorrow, as there's a massive expanse of sand to negotiate to get to the river - miles of flat soft stuff. Instead, I'm advised to ride south-ish towards the long Jamuna Bridge and get a boat from there. It seems to make sense, which after the sort of day I've had, is most welcome.



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we are

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HIV/AIDS Advocacy World Tour on Bicycle

In June 2008, a group of youth set off for an advocacy world tour on bicycle to aware likeminded people about HIV/AIDS. Group of three started their journey from Thailand. This was no other commuting or touring but finding the local organizations and delivering the advocacy materials were prime objectives of the team.

Let's be together, let's stop AIDS, believing this motto, the team delivered the message to cities on different continents. This initiative directly brought the benefit to the Millennium Development Goal/MDG.

Tirino will represent a photo story in its every issue as part a part of the team's conjugation with adventure and advocacy.

A close-up, high-angle photograph of a cyclist's legs in grey cycling tights and black shoes, pedaling a road bike on a paved surface. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the bike and the ground.

brianperic

A TALE OF ADVENTURE CYCLING WESTERN CHINA

So, the story of bicycle expeditions begins. I learned to cycle around my neighborhood at 5 years, and recall having a stone removed from the palm of my hand with a pocket knife at 6, my father and neighbor attending and we found the stone! Thus, my first initiation into adventure cycling began to take roots, some three decades ago in southwestern Ontario, Canada.

In 1986, my sister signed a paper at the local grocery store and amazingly became the prize winner of a steel frame mountain bike in that raffle; it was red, it was new and it provided an outlet for all my energy for the next decade. I loved all the freedom of bicycle travel from the beginnings.





In the 1990's, I continued to cycle in bicycle clubs, where I learned the maintenance skills and training routines from local pros in Caboto Velo Club and later Maple Leaf Cycling Clubs of Windsor, Canada. I completed two weekend adventures at first. With my Sicilian-Canadian born friend, Giro Viviano, we completed three stages of 240km in 10 hours, to a beachside holiday town known as Grand Bend. Our last

stage was rained and hailed (frozen stones of ice from the heavens) out, so we took shelter in a barn in the countryside and collected a stray dog, one that my family nursed for the next seven years.

All experiences are connected, and bicycling is no different, it has eternal revolutions and restores vitality for cyclists around the world. At the time, I didn't know people traveled

around the world on bicycles at all, that knowledge would be revealed in social media, blogs, and social connections in 2008/2009. In the spring of 2008, I purchased the cheapest and durable mountain bike at an online auction site in South Korea.

I moved back to Asia in 2007, a return since living and teaching English in South Korea (2001–2002) and southern China (2002–2003) to continue life with my extended family, now a multicultural union with Min Jae (4), Sierra (2), and Mi Sung who has been a soul mate since I arrived in Asia in 2001. Where does cycling fit into all of this, well, it's right in the middle of my life in Asia.

In South Korea, I found bicycle touring to become an outlet for energy and stress-relief as an English Teacher. In 2009, having completed numerous coast-to-coast and cross-Korea cycling missions, I launched a group using social media (Facebook) to introduce my desire to bicycle from the Arctic of Canada to the end of Patagonia, Argentina. It was the beginning for me, I was familiar with cycling and completely new to bicycle touring.

I did have a few experiences behind me, adventure canoe guiding at 21 in boundary waters Canada; a background in motorcycle touring across the United States and western and central Canada (1994–1998), where I crisscrossed North America on budget tours, accumulating 24,000km in just 60 days on

five cross-country commutes between, work and school; adventure tour guide in the southwest of the United States in 2000. I adopted the migratory pattern throughout my university career, and loved the experiences that adventure travel could bring for many years afterwards. I just couldn't settle down until I came to South Korea and met my wife. But the adventure still continues today!

How did I do it? How to travel across North America on a tight budget (in the 1990's) by motorcycle? The technique, to travel long distances at a minimal cost was learnt through advice from a few close friends motorcycleing at my college. They shared their cross America photo albums (35mm prints, before internet was popularized) and asked how they did it. This was their secret...

“Brian, it's simple... we ride until we need to sleep, we sleep anywhere outside, use tents or a tarp as a temporary shelter and have a sleeping bag handy; remain unseen, so do not have open fires; eat when you need to eat; the rest is up to you!”

To emphasize this lesson, I had a very cheap sleeping bag, it was cold or rainy every night when I started out learning the hard way, the cold way, the fast way, no sleep and 1300km a day in the motorcycle saddle. I bought a 1970's snowmobile suit, one that was used in winter and it looked like something a spaceman would wear, I loved the look, very futuristic.



Those foundations were important because almost 20 years later, I would discover bicycle touring from the legends that current roam the globe, I personally only know a few of this incredible collective, but I can definitely mention a few of them who have inspired me to begin adventure expedition touring. So, without knowing just a

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For any mode of adventure touring, there is always a test flight, mine was taken on a Friday night. I had a plastic tarp, cheap sleeping bag, winter gloves, a backpack with a toothbrush and the silver snowmobile suit, and a used leather jacket from a resale store. My boots were steel toed used on construction sites when I was in high school.

At that time, the motorcycle was the most important ingredient (today it is the bicycle!), and it would be my home on the road for several seasons of adventure across North America. I recall sleeping in 4 hotels, 24,000km, 60 days (56 nights camping, 10 nights in designated-pay campgrounds, 45 nights stealth camping anywhere like picnic tables, under shelters, tarps, or occasionally using a tent. The motorcycles broke down once and I spent 1 night with a family in Iron Mountain, Michigan).

few of the soul seekers, adventure spirited free riders, bike lovers (because it can be risky, it takes skills, preparation and above all, goals to become successful in this genre of cycling...all have devoted a great of their lives to perfecting the revolutions in adventure cycling travel, all have something special to offer audiences in books, blogs, social media or where they choose to share their messages in different mediums. I have learned a great deal and I wish to thank all of them. From these foundations, many I cultivate on my own, while out cycling and exploring the solitude of solo rides, or in the company of a friend, bicycle touring is the next level of adventure, a book unwritten until you decide to write the page. It's adventure, it's an open road with many possibilities for you to discover. And this is what I love about becoming an adventure cyclist, it's all the

destinations unknown, the butterflies in your stomach, the fear of trying, the new hope, the chance, the freedom, obtained by facing your fears, overcoming them, and organizing to become success in adventure travel. Step by step.

In the summer of last year, I felt finally ready for bicycle touring expeditions. I had a window of 60 days (in the last 5 years, the longest leave possible, all on two wheels, all for adventure and exploring the world, I committed myself, I arranged my family to be in good hands, I prepared everything on my own, and received supportive messages from my local friends and those with similar interests in social media, it was time, I could not back out, I had found foundations to support in my expedition, I had found the open window, I was ready to take a leap into

nowhere I have ever gone before. Explore! And I did!

HimalayasX2011/2012 is a 60-day bicycle touring expedition. I created the idea after browsing the internet. I watched a movie short about traveling across Tibet on Vimeo.com and decided to explore western China. I had met Rob Hill, an Explorer/Mountaineer whom I suffered from Crohn's Disease through a mutual friend on Facebook. I became connected to mountaineer and founder of IDEAS (Intestinal Disease Education and Awareness Society) because my brother has suffered from the same incurable disease for the last 15 years, I know has been tough on my brother and mission impossible for an explorer. But, Robert Hill had overcome all odds against him with the disease and the mountains, successfully completed all summits as a Crohn's survivor, charity supporter for foundation work and as an athlete with an ostomy that acts as a bypass system for gastrointestinal system. He would be the first ostomate with IBD (inflammatory bowel disease) that in 2010, completed the 7 Summits, the 7 highest peaks for mountaineering, including Mount Everest from Nepal and Mount Vincent on Antarctica. I ride bicycle expeditions inspired by guys with real courage like Explorer/Mountaineer Robert Hill, and I now proudly support the IDEAS foundation on all my upcoming expeditions.





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USIAD's Project IPAC's

Patenga Beach Clean-Up

reenationalism

1st Feb, 6 AM and as the morning sun geared up for a hot day, a group of people friendily set up a booth, stage and synchronized the sound system.

The chairs were set and all was ready for the beach clean-up event with the US ambassador and other embassy officials at Patenga beach in Chittagong.

The USAID project Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC) that spans across 25 Protected Areas (PAs) of Bangladesh, involves communities to collaborate with three Govt. departments (Fisheries, Environment and Forests) to form the Nishorgo Network for the preservation of forests and wetlands. The beach clean-up was an essential part of USAID's America Week in Chittagong. In sync with Nishorgo Network's recent campaign on Responsible Tourism, the beach clean-up involving the Girls and Boys Scouts, students of Chittagong University (CU) and embassy officials

was set to foster a sense of individual and collective responsibility towards protecting the environment.

By 8 AM as the sun started filtering through the trees, a group of 50 scouts arrived and silently lined up in 10 separate color coded groups. They were soon joined by a more boisterous crowd of 55 students from Chittagong University, who had corresponding colored ribbons. As the sand swirled up in a cloud around their feet, the students stood in ten separate lines, in ten color coded teams. Two sets of bamboo baskets, a magenta one for the non-organic waste and green colored ones for organic or biological waste were set in front of this group and they patiently waited for the US ambassador.

The US ambassador Mr. Dan Mozena arrived with a bevy of officials and journalists and after a small welcome session on the make shift stage,



the ambassador shared his thoughts. He urged everyone to become more responsible citizens and work towards a cleaner Bangladesh, for a Beautiful Bangladesh, a beautiful tomorrow. He also mentioned how he would make it a point to pick up any litter he saw on his way to his office in Washington DC. The Mission Director of USAID Mr. Richard Greene stressed on Nishorgo Network's impact in the areas of Climate Change and urged the students to be more sentient towards saving their environment. Mr. Isthiaq Uddin Ahmad, former Chief Conservator of Forests spoke about how the youth could contribute towards a more sustainable future by becoming more sentient, while other GOB officials were also present. Ms. Afroza Haque Ripa spoke on behalf of the student body and pledged to not only be close to nature but to work towards preserving it. As the day grew steadily hotter, his Excellency the ambassador donned the black rubber gloves and led the way to the clean-up of the 1 km stretch of the Patenga beach.

Students, scouts, US embassy and IPAC officials scattered all over the beach and baskets were quickly filled with trash of all shapes and sizes. Members of the clean-up team ducked and balanced

themselves behind the massive boulders that lined the beach to protect it from the lashing waves and picked out plastic wrappers and other trash. Diligently and meticulously 24 baskets were filled and as the 2 city corporation trucks backed up to collect the trash, the students headed towards the hand washing zone where the Deputy Mission Director of USAID Mr. Paul Sabatine demonstrated proper hand washing by lathering soap for at least 20 seconds. As people returning from the clean-up ripped off their gloves and dabbed hand sanitizer, the ambassador bid his adieus and made a brief stopover at the make shift booth that represented hand crafted ware (bamboo masks, embroidered saris, bead jewelry etc.) made by the beneficiaries of the Nishorgo Network, who had also made the bamboo waste baskets and stood gleaming at their booth.

Ami Prokriti'r, Prokriti Amar (I Am Nature's, Nature is Mine) sung the voice of Abida as Nishorgo Network's official song played in the background and the students mingled with each other and a general feeling of achievement rippled across them. Pictures were taken, numbers swapped and students stood sharing their thoughts on the clean-up program. Mohsin, a 3rd year

JOIN ICE

Sept/Nov 2012



International
**Coastal
Cleanup**

student of Public Health from CU, was excited about being part of the project. 'It was great to be a part of this. Now that we have been here, from the next time we'll make sure no one trashes any litter.' Rafique, another 3rd year student from CU, however asked for dustbins for the beach, which would be the only way to stop the littering.

Next, the ten team leaders were asked to come forward and each was given the ICC form to fill out for the trash collected by their teams. Teams sat huddled together while they filled out the forms and laughed over some of the questions like the most peculiar item found on the beach and someone shouted out "hair"! The scouts were then gathered and a raucous session of thank you that ended in a loud cheer and much applause, saw them off while the CU students stayed back to eat a

lunch being cooked for them at one of the local restaurants. 30 Bamboo waste baskets had been given out to the neighboring restaurants in a bid to raise more local awareness, while the restaurant owner preparing the lunch had also made the effort to clean the area around his restaurant.

As the beach looked whiter and cleaner and the students sought shade to rest in, a day spent in cleaning a small stretch of the Patenga beach may have been just enough towards leaving an impact upon the members of the day's clean-up program. A feeling of awareness that instills them to realize their individual and collective responsibility towards protecting the environment; a feeling that inspired Nishorgo Network's tag line of I am Nature's, Nature is Mine.



Bengali globetrotter Hammath Biswas traveled around the world on his bi-cycle in early 19th century



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