Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme

Maple Leaf International School's Trip to Cox's Bazaar

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COX'S Bazar, with its exotic white sandy beaches, breath taking sites and mouth-watering cuisine, is an ideal tourist spot, which attracts hundreds of thousands every year. Even when it comes to the people of this nation, it is one of the most commonly visited places, mostly for the beach, which is said to be the longest natural sea beach in the world.

I, a student of Maple Leaf International School and a Gold Awardee of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme, went on an adventurous trip to Cox's Bazar along with twenty-seven other Awardees and four Award Leaders, Abdur Raquib, Taher, Shaheen Khan and Rahmat Tara.

The Award Programme was divided into three stages- Bronze, Silver, and Gold level and we were taken to field trips for each level as the Adventurous Journey, during which we were assigned to do different tasks, conduct surveys, meet challenges etc. Jim Parker, one of the Award Leaders of the Award Programme in UK was there to see us along with Shuman Saha, the national director of the Award Programme in Bangladesh.

I remember how exciting it was when 24 hours before the bus was to start off for Cox's Bazar. There was adrenaline rush and it was as if I had had tons of chocolate which kept me hyper all day long! I even went to the bus terminal about an hour before the bus was supposed to start off. I thought I would be the first one there but was actually the last. The bus departed earlier than scheduled and stopped right in front of Motel Probal the next day at about 9 in the morning and we resided there for the entire trip. The last time I had been there was 7 years back and that place was filled with tourists staying over at the motel. Due to an off-season the place was not that crowded as it used to be.

We had a packed three-day agenda. At first we checked in to the hotel, changed, and went straight to the beach. The sight of the beach made everyone exuberant. My friends and I ran as fast as our legs could carry us. The only thing that could not penetrate my thick head at the time was how hot the sand was and I realized it only after I felt my feet barbequing on hot sand! It was an amazing experience being at the beach after such a long time, even though it was excessively hot and sunny. I played volleyball and beach football for the first time in my life and even rode a horse, which was especially fun. After the beach we took a dip in the indoor swimming pool at our hotel to cool off.

After lunch we walked to a very old Buddhist monastery. Honestly, I was wondering how these buildings are standing still. We climbed a hill behind the monastery and were taken aback by the breath-taking view from the hilltop. Then a few of us experienced the thrill of shopping in the Burmese Market local taste, traders selling pickles, dry fish etc. I, on the other hand, decided to stay back as my feet were aching for all the walking we had done so far.



The next day, one of our Award Leaders, Mr. Raquib, conducted a meditation session at the beach. It was very relaxing, and do believe me when I say relaxing. We had breakfast at a local restaurant, and then we got ready for a trek to Himchari which is about 8-10 km from Cox's Bazaar town. A drive would have taken hardly 15-20 minutes, but the trek took us four and a half hours. Trekking along the beach with cool blue water lashing at our feet was an exhilarating experience. We experienced a slice of local life on our way, when we spoke to people living in the hills, whose children would implore us to buy sea shells and some would even sing to us, which was particularly cute. It was wonderful to see the smile on their faces when they sold sea shells or