



Sir Edmund Hillary Tribute Bike Ride

STORY BY MUNTASIR MAMUN IMRAN

Perhaps everyone around us know the name of Mt Everest, highest mountain on earth, majestic symbol of courage for mankind from the ages! 29th May 1953 is perhaps the most significant day for mountaineering; it was the triumph of the last couple of hundred years' as the effort for conquest of Mt. Everest no long stays undiscovered. Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay successfully achieved summit of the crown of all mountain systems on earth. The history of human civilization received another feather in the crown. They achieved the summit and proved that nothing is impossible, man can do anything and that success lies within courage!

On January 11, 2008, this great man passed away in New Zealand at the age of 88 and we designed our riding trip as a tribute to him: Sir Edmund Hillary ride, 88+Km.

It was a new route for adventure influenced community, Kewkradong Bangladesh; from Feni to hill town Khagrachori. We left Dhaka obscurely as it was 3 am and most of the roads were empty. Diffusing street lamps and mist covered road got charged by our two four wheelers carrying eight riders and their bicycles.

After breakfast we started riding at 9 am though it was foggy and less visible. While settling down bikes and others, we found a small crowd surrounding us. So many curious eyes, asking – what is this, why we are doing this, what's the output?

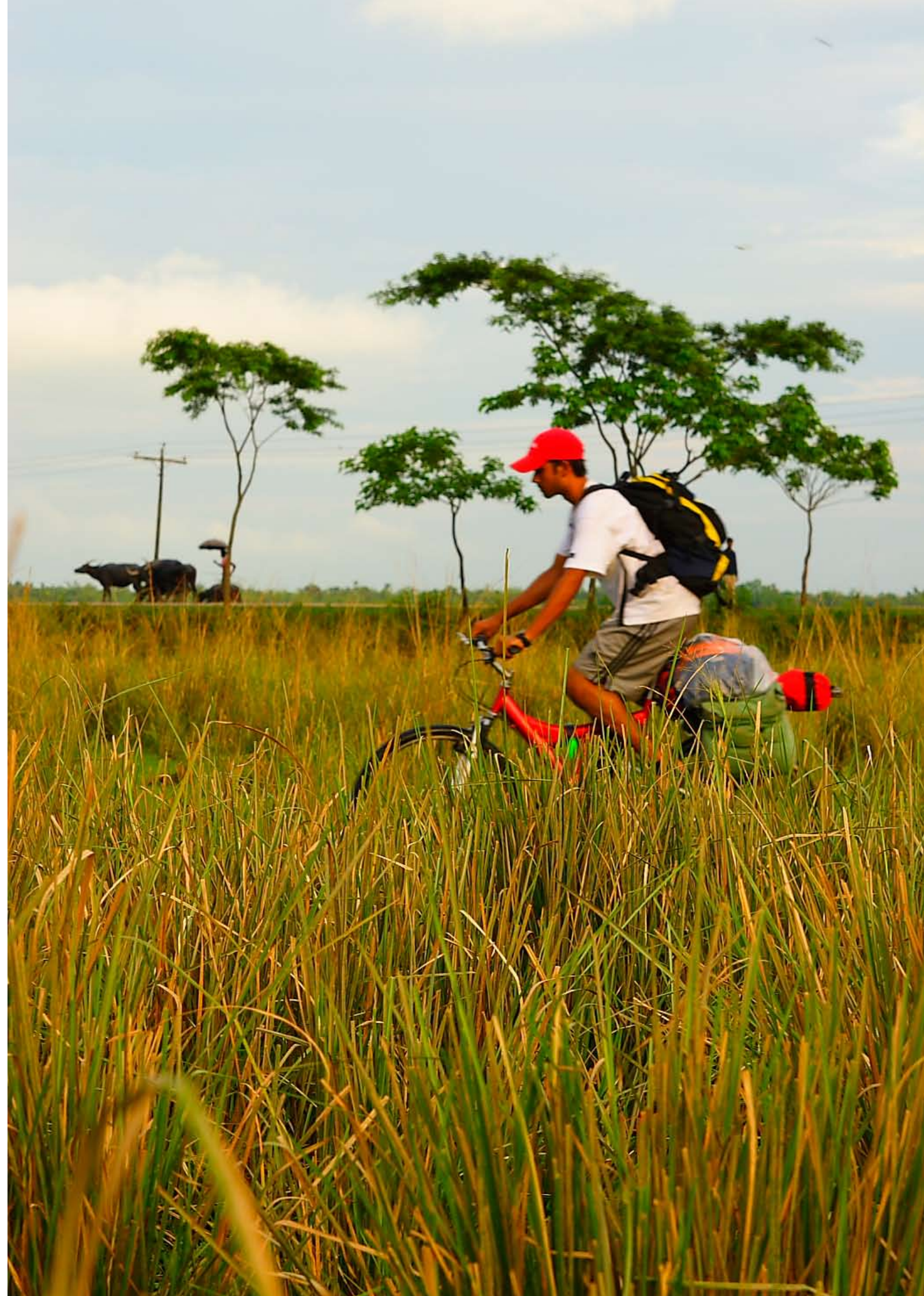
We followed a road to Chagolnaiya, metalloid road and mostly calm as



it is not a national high way. Starting was difficult as a lady rider Salma and Francois, an expatriate working in International School Dhaka was with us for the first time as they drew mass public attraction. But after some time we got back to our flow and kept peddling. We had planned to halt at Ramgor for first night but

unfortunately faced problem with Salma's bike which was unable to be repaired by our 'experts' Sagor and Tonmoy. Finding no other alternative we just hooked up that bike on our support car and Salma had to sacrifice her joyful ride.

The road was leading towards high, and it's frequent now. The





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slopes are stupendous; it felt as if we were rolling like avalanche in the snow covered gradient of Himalaya. Fast and furious! At a maximum speed 49K according to our GPS. It was scenic and clean. We took snack as our lunch on a pedestal of a nicely maintained pond of neighboring house owner. They helped us with drinking water.

It was going late in the noon, sun was going down. Salma stopped at a nice place as she was quite ahead of us in search of a place to stay for this night. Datmara Rubber Garden, largest rubber garden in Asia, was on our way. Bungalow of general manager was covered with towering tall trees. He liked our venture and decided to give us a shelter inside the garden.

We started very early in the next morning, even the local people hadn't woke up by then. We were in hurry as we had to paddle more 71Km to reach

Khagrachori by that day. It was an exhilarating ride across unexpectedly appearing tea gardens. Gentle downhill slopes energized our ride to paddle continuously.

We had to face police formalities at Ramgor as we were entering into Khagrachori from Feni as Chittagong Hill Tracts is rebuff for the foreigners since quite long. They helped us with their most reverent support which made our trip more secured.

After crossing 88 Kilometer from our starting point we stopped under a banyan tree bordering the road. Few moments later, we had a little discussion among us about Sir Edmund Hillary; although none of us is a master historian of this departed soul but it was clear that we like his greatness, we envy his post Mt Everest expedition work in remote parts of Nepal, and we love Sir Edmund Hillary.

Going was getting tough after our mid day meal.

Up-hill roads ahead. We came to know that our China-made so called 8 gear Mountain bikes were prolonging so many problems that it could hardly be capable of paddling up trail. Only we could talk with them and it was equally tough and tiresome considering its heavily packed panniers in the rear wheel.

Gradients of the road were going higher and higher and day light started going thin. Only 6 Km from here, and we could reach the bottleneck of Khagrachori with jaw dropping curves and slopes onward. There is not the slightest chance of riding any more in this vigorously long terrain. Which is nearly 6 kilometer and uninterruptible, reminded us of the muscular obstacle of Mt Everest, just after the bottleneck and before the summit of the mighty mountain named "The Hillary Step", a knife edge ridge which is not less than hundred meter,

filtering mental strength of thousand climber now and forever; winner are those – who are lucky and brave. This is the last, this is the last of all agonizing journey, and the summit was waiting.

We discussed all these things while taking food only to boost up our spirit to survive a bit more in this spell-bound moon-lit road. Another small push, just another hundred meter, just another small push, we have to finish this "Hillary Slope" (as we named it!), we have to reach to the crest. It was triggering our juvenile hearts to fill the profound joy of success as summit; this is what some one's extreme aspiration of reaching higher can come from!

We made it at last, we made it to the darkness of tranquil hill, and we had safely reached Alutilla at 8.15 pm and lodged in Khagrashori Circuit House by the night. ■

