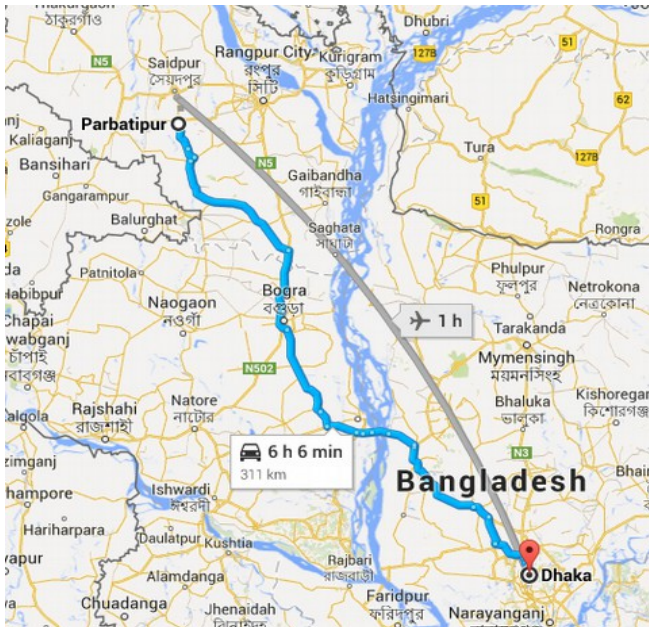


Barefoot in Bangladesh

I recently had the privilege and thrill of living and teaching in north-west Bangladesh and by local custom, barefoot, of course.

I was invited by Dr Ian Cochrane to join him and five others to go to Livingstone School and spend two months teaching the teachers to teach Geography, in my case. We did this in two courses. The first course was teaching the Primary school topics and the second course was for the better students who were trained in topics for Years 7 & 8. The school will commence Year 7 next year and Year 8 in 2016.



We travelled from Dhaka to Parbatipur by train - a nine hour trip, but it's not too bad in first class.

At one stage the railway line runs right along the Indian border. For some

unexplained reason, the train stopped there and was boarded by a female smuggler. It wasn't long before three police officers came through our carriage each carrying a large rifle, looking for the culprit. I believe that if they found her, she would have paid them a suitable sum and that would have ended the matter.



Figure 1: Female smuggler.



Figure 2: A vanguard

At Parbatipur, we were met by a large contingent of staff and organised onto vanguardies (Figure 2) to be pedalled the 4km through the night to Rajabashor Village, where we were to stay.

The next day we received a tremendous welcome at the school involving showering us with flowers, washing our feet and putting on a concert in our honour. It was very humbling.

Most students at the school are the first people in their family ever to attend a school. Figure 3 shows one of the school "buses" on the access road to the school. We had very comfortable accommodation above the Headmaster's house, in what would have seemed to be very luxurious to the locals. We had plumbing, including a (cold) shower, a living and a dining room. Most of the teachers lived in mud or brick huts with one or two bedrooms. They had shared kitchens and bathrooms/laundries with their neighbours.



Figure 3: The school "bus"



Figure 4: A "bathroom".

The bathroom usually consisted of a manual water pump. (See figure 4.) However, despite their lack of possessions, they always turned up at school looking immaculate.

They were very hospitable and often entertained us - in their bedrooms. This was a wonderful experience and I am very glad that I went. I learnt far more than I taught, though what I taught was really appreciated by the local teachers. I would highly recommend that all teachers pray to see if the Lord is calling them to this type of service.

John Hain.



Figure 5: Entertaining in the bedroom.