Living on the Edge

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It is easy to say that cyclones are part and parcel of living in Bangladesh. The statement is easy to make because I personally have not had to live through a one. While they batter and bruise the south of the country I, like millions of others, sit in the comfort of my home and watch coverage of the 'event' on TV. It is sad to say, but when SIDR occurred, while I sympathised with what the people of the south went through, I could not empathise with them. I could not truly say, I felt what they were going through. While I donated money and channelled my prayers towards their well-being, I could never truly understand their pain and suffering. All that changed last week, when for a few hours, I visited Sharonkhola a year after SIDR and saw first hand how fragile life is on the edge of Bangladesh.

The opportunity arose when the Department for International Development (DFID) chartered a plane to Sharonkhola to check up on their post-SIDR related activities. I took one of the empty seats on the plane in the hope that finally going down there would help me understand the situation better. The trip by seaplane was a first for me, and the sight of Bangladesh from the air was something I will not soon forget. To see our nation from the air is to fall in love with it again. The endless greenery and winding rivers make up the contours of a land that most of us will never see. As we neared our destination, the landscape changed just a little, the trees thinned out a little and the closer we got to the ground, the easier it was to see that the land had suffered tremendous trauma.