

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)

PRESS RELEASE

1 July 2002

BANGLADESHI FOREIGN MINISTER TOURS UNAMSIL DEPLOYMENTS

Freetown – The visiting Bangladeshi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Morshed Khan, accompanied by the Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Lt. Gen. Daniel I. Opande, yesterday visited the towns of Mile 91, Magburaka and Lunsar where Bangladeshi peacekeepers serving with UNAMSIL are deployed. Earlier, the minister had visited the northern town of Kabala in Koinadugu District on 29 June where he attended a free medical camp organized by the Bangladeshi medical team.

In Mile 91, the minister was briefed on the current rehabilitating work on the 54-km road between Mile 91 and Magburaka. Construction of the road began in March 2002 and will be completed by the end of this month. The minister congratulated the peacekeepers for their work, describing it as “unique.” He also praised them for being “social workers and guardians of the people of Sierra Leone.”

After a 30-minute drive along the partially repaired road, the minister arrived in Magburaka where he visited a secondary school under construction. The school is being built by Bangladeshi peacekeepers with the assistance of the local community under the Bangladeshi-Sierra Leone Agro Programme, a cooperation agreement between the Government of Bangladesh and the Government of Sierra Leone.

At the colorful ceremony, the Sierra Leone Ambassador to Bangladesh, Ms. Haja Alari Cole, who accompanied the minister, commended the social and humanitarian assistance the Bangladeshi contingent is providing to the local community and urged the Government of Bangladesh to continue the support, in particular in the areas of agriculture, technology, human resources, education and training.

In his response, Minister Morshed renewed his Government’s commitment to Sierra Leone and thanked the local communities for their support and their willingness to revive their country “You have a rich land, you have a rich heart. Every inch of this land should be utilized. You have to invest in yourselves,” he said.

The minister also visited a farm, created under the same cooperation agreement, where some 150 ex-combatants are being reintegrated as workers. He donated US\$1,000.00 to

UNAMSIL Headquarters, Mammy Yoko, P. O. Box 5, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Tel: 232-22-273-183/4/5 Fax: 232-22-273-189

boost their farming activities and stressed that the farm “should become a model for Sierra Leone.”

Later in the day, the minister was briefed on the activities of the Bangladeshi contingent in their areas of deployment and, before leaving Magburaka, also addressed the Bangladeshi peacekeepers. The tour ended in Lunsar where the minister addressed the soldiers and commended them on their important contributions to the Mission.

During his visit to Kabala on 29 June, Minister Morshed, who was accompanied by the Bangladeshi Ambassador accredited to Sierra Leone and based in Morocco, Maj. Gen. Anwar Hussein, and UNAMSIL Sector 4 Commander, Brig. Gen. Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan, visited a medical camp in the town where he was greeted by thousands of people who had turned up to receive free medical treatment.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Morshed said his Government was happy to be able to help the country to bring peace to its people, adding that Bangladeshi “remain committed to build a new Sierra Leone.”

“Don’t give up hope. Don’t give up expectations,” the minister said to loud cheering from the people. He expressed his pleasure to be in Sierra Leone and implored Sierra Leoneans to work hard so that in his next visit he will find Sierra Leone re-built to its original state with improved infrastructure.

Later, the minister addressed the Bangladeshi Battalion (BANBATT) 5 peacekeepers, urging them to continue with their commitment to peace and stability in Sierra Leone. The address was followed by a military briefing in which the Commanding Officer of BANBATT 5, Col. Mohammed Abdul Kari, informed the minister that the security situation in the area was calm and stable.