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**ACTING FORCE COMMANDER WELCOMES NEW BATTALIONS
OF BANGLADESHI PEACEKEEPERS**

Freetown - The Acting Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Maj. Gen. Martin L. Agwai, yesterday visited the towns of Lunsar and Lungi in the western district of Port Loko to welcome new battalions of Bangladeshi peacekeepers who have just joined the mission to replace troops who recently completed their tour of duty.

In his welcome address to the troops, the Acting Force Commander expressed satisfaction with their preparedness for the tasks ahead. He explained that with the kind of knowledge they had received during the pre-deployment training, he can count on them to execute UNAMSIL's mandate satisfactorily. "With my prior knowledge of the previous Bangladeshi units, I'm fully confident that you will perform your tasks as stipulated," he said, urging them to uphold self-discipline and to maintain good health.

The Commanding Officer of Bangladeshi Artillery (BANARTY) 2, Col. Mohammed Shawkat, briefed the Acting Force Commander on his troops' current operations, explaining that the security situation in the area was calm and peaceful. He commended their predecessors, BANARTY 1, for their achievements in creating an environment that led to a successful disarmament and the holding of free and fair elections. Life in the town of Lunsar was getting back to normal.

Col. Shawkat said that his officers are encouraging ex-combatants to assist local chiefdom structures and the Sierra Leone Police to assume their traditional roles in the society. He also briefed Maj. Gen. Agwai on the humanitarian activities the peacekeepers were undertaking which included provision of medical care, rehabilitation of schools and mosques and donation of both food and non-food items as well as food-for-work projects.

Later, the Acting Force Commander visited Lungi International Airport to welcome Bangladeshi Battalion (BANBATT) 7 peacekeepers where he received a similar briefing on the security situation in the area from the battalion's Commanding Officer, Col. Mirza Ashem Salahuddin. Following his address, Maj. Gen. Agwai toured the West Runway Camp at Lungi Airport where commended Bangladeshi units deployed at the camp and implored them to maintain their vigilance.

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