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BANGLADESHI PEACEKEEPERS HONOURED

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 22 September 2005 - 232 soldiers along with fourteen officers of the Bangladeshi Peacekeepers were decorated on Thursday with the United Nations Service Medal at a colourful military parade in Freetown. They were awarded the prized Medals for 90 days of distinguished service to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone (DSRSG), Mr. Victor Angelo; the Force Commander, Major-General Sajjad Akram; Sierra Leone Deputy Defence Minister, Ambassador Joe Blell; Minister of Labour, Alpha Timbo; and the Iranian Ambassador to Sierra Leone, His Excellency Ali Tahaghoghi, pinned the ceremonious medals on the officers and men of the Bangladesh Admin and Signal Unit (BANADMIN&SIG).

In his keynote address, as Guest of Honour, the Deputy SRSR said that Bangladesh Signal Contingents have been very effective in providing communications to UNAMSIL since its inception. The BANADMIN&SIG were assigned the challenge to providing the security for UNAMSIL Headquarters. He said the Signalers were not only committed to providing communications but were also very much part of winning the hearts and minds of the people of Sierra Leone. He said the unit has been recognised for its invaluable contributions in nation building activities. He also stressed that regardless of their limited manpower, they have continued to assist the Government in improving the capabilities of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces through training in different fields of communications.

Bangladesh has been an active contributor to the UN peacekeeping efforts around the globe since the late 1980's to date, according to Mr. Victor Angelo, and the performance of its troops has been praised. He said the discipline and devotion exhibited by the officers and men of the Bangladesh Armed Forces reflect their excellence in peacekeeping under very demanding conditions. He explained that the richness of Bangladeshi culture, religious values and acceptance of the ethics and values of the host country wherever they operate have made them peacekeepers par excellence.

In his welcome address, the Contingent's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel

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Salifu Islam, disclosed that they feel a deep sense of accomplishment taking part in the most successful peacekeeping efforts in recent history. He prayed that the people of Sierra Leone will nurture the peace they are now enjoying and tread the path of prosperity and development.

Highlights of the ceremony included the cutting of cake by the Special Guest of Honor, Mr. Victor Angelo, and cultural activities by BANADMIN&SIG and Sierra Leone arts groups.