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PRESS RELEASE

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Bangladesh seeks fair play on DFQF issue

Mohammad Ziauddin, the Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States, met with Congressman Adrian Smith (R - Nebraska) in Washington, DC on Monday and discussed trade related issues and other development achievements of Bangladesh. Mr. Smith is one of the Members of the House Ways and Means Committee, which has jurisdiction over all taxations, tariffs, and other revenue-raising measures.

Speaking on trade issues, Ambassador Ziauddin informed the Congressman that Bangladesh is one of the largest apparel exporters to the USA. However, it along with other Asian and Oceanian Least Developed Countries (LDCs), does not get Duty Free Quota Free (DFQF) access of their products to the US market. On the other hand, all the 34 African LDCs under a group called 'AGOA' (African Growth and Opportunity Act) are enjoying this facility. Therefore, a section of LDCs are deprived of getting the equal access to the US market. The Ambassador urged that the US should allow all LDCs to get DFQF access on the basis of justice and fair play. He also highlighted that the European Union is providing DFQF access to all 48 LDCs at present on EBA (Everything But Arms) policy. Therefore, Bangladesh, as the current Chair of LDCs, sought US support on the DFQF issue so that no country suffers from discrimination and injustice.

The Ambassador also briefed the Congressman on the existing excellent relations between Bangladesh and the USA, which is based on four pillars, namely partnership dialogue, security dialogue, military-military cooperation and TICFA. He also mentioned about the mutual cooperation in countering terrorism and extremism including intelligence sharing. He said Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is a strong believer of zero tolerance to terrorism and violent extremism. Having a cruel past of brutal killings of her father, the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other members of her family in 1975, as well as 19 assassination attempts on her own life till today, she possesses intrinsic detestation against all forms of extremism and terrorism.

The Ambassador also highlighted many development priorities of the present government of Bangladesh, including women empowerment and education. He said that the government has taken initiatives to introduce modern education for the

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madrassa (religious school) students so that they can adapt with the mainstream society and thus get rid of the religious extremism. He also said 90 percent of four million workers in the RMG industry are women who have stepped out of their homes and are contributing to poverty alleviation, literacy, and above all weakening extremism and reinforcing the government efforts to eliminate extremism and terrorism. He said that women are transforming the society into a progressive one and it is a solution for ridding the country of all forms of violent elements.

Congressman Smith appreciated Ambassador Ziauddin's brief on the trade issues. He said trade encourages the opportunity of people to contribute to the economy and it establishes good partnerships among the countries. He remarked that he would look forward to more opportunities to develop the existing trade relations. He also said that he would look into the DFQF issue. The Ambassador thanked the Congressman for sparing his time for the meeting. Mr. Toufique Hasan, Counsellor (Political) of the Embassy and Mr. Matt Reynolds, Legislative Assistant of Congressman Smith, were also present during the meeting.

