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PRESS RELEASE

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Ambassador Ziauddin meets Congressman Gerry Connolly

Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States Mohammad Ziauddin met with US Congressman Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA) Tuesday (Sept 8) and discussed wide range of issues including restoration of GSP for Bangladesh.

Other issues that came up during one-hour meeting include present government's efforts for empowering women, combating terrorism and religious extremism and Dhaka-Washington cooperation in various fields.

The Ambassador told the Congressman that the US government should restore the GSP facility and duty-free access of Bangladeshi products to the American market, particularly RMG to strengthen Bangladesh's ongoing fight against extremism.

The envoy said that Bangladesh-US bilateral relations are based on mutual respect and trust and both share same values and objectives.

Congressman Gerry Connolly, who is the Ranking Member of the subcommittee on Government Operations and member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, is a leading voice on foreign assistance reform, war powers, and democracy promotion abroad in the House.

The Ambassador informed that Bangladesh and the US meet regularly under partnership dialogue, security dialogue, military to military dialogue and TICFA. He said delegates from both the countries will meet this Friday (Sept 11) for the 4th security dialogue in Washington, he added.

While discussing present government's ongoing crackdown against the extremists, the Ambassador said that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is herself a victim of terrorist acts.

In 1975, Bangladesh's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who is the father of the present Prime Minister, was brutally killed along with 18 members of his family. Having such sore past, the Prime Minister is personally committed to uproot extremism and terrorism from the soil of Bangladesh. Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is working closely with the United States and neighbors to eliminate extremism and terrorism within its borders and beyond.

Ambassador Ziauddin informed that Bangladesh strongly condemns the killings and terrorist acts perpetrated by the ISIL and stands beside the US to counter all forms of violent extremism across the world.

The Ambassador said that the present government put high priority on education and women empowerment. In this connection, he mentioned that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who represents the voice of women in South Asia and the only Muslim woman leader among the OIC member countries, is relentlessly working on the education and women empowerment in Bangladesh. He said that 90 % of the four million workers in the RMG industry are women. These women have stepped out of their homes, contributing to poverty alleviation, literacy, and above all weakening extremism and reinforcing government's efforts to eliminate extremism and terrorism. In a way the women are

transforming the society into a progressive one, which is a panacea for ridding the country of all forms of extremism and radicalization.

Ziauddin said Bangladesh does not enjoy GSP or any trade preference from the US while preferential treatments being provided to its trans-pacific partners shall undermine the competitiveness of Bangladeshi products in the US market. Bangladesh apparels are subjected to high tariff in the US as opposed to zero tariffs to almost all other developed countries in the world.

This predicts a negative consequence for the export of Bangladeshi RMG to the US with devastating impact on Bangladesh's apparel industry, women empowerment, poverty alleviation and above all, country's war against extremism and terrorism.

Congressman Connolly recalled that during the war of independence in 1971 he was a college student and fully aware of the sacrifices made by the people of Bangladesh and supported the legitimate cause of struggle for independence.

Congressman Connolly said that he is also well aware of the environmental challenges being faced by Bangladesh and appreciated the people for continued endurance against the natural disasters like storm, flood and cyclone.

Congressman Connolly, who serves as vice-chair of the New Democrat Coalition expressed his sincere willingness to stand beside Bangladesh for restoration of the GSP, and thanked the Ambassador for briefing him on Bangladesh. Counselor Political Nayem Uddin Ahmed of the embassy accompanied the Ambassador.

