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PRESS RELEASE

Date : 09 February 2016

Bangladesh Ambassador meets Congressman Sander M. Levin

Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States Mohammad Ziauddin met with Congressman Sander M. Levin (D-Michigan) on Tuesday and discussed issues of mutual interests including DFQF access of Bangladeshi products to U.S. market.

Mr. Levin is the Ranking Member of the House Ways and Means Committee, which has jurisdiction over all tax, trade and economic growth policies and entitlement spending, including social security, medicare, welfare and unemployment compensation.

The Ambassador briefed the Congressman on the wide array of Bangladesh-US bilateral relations. He said that the Bangladesh-US relations are based on mutual respect and trust and both share same values and objectives. The Ambassador informed that Bangladesh and the US meet regularly in the framework of Partnership Dialogue, Security Dialogue, Military to Military Dialogue and TICFA.

While discussing present government's ongoing crackdown on religious 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 a cruel past, she has vowed "zero tolerance" against all forms of extremism and terrorism and is personally committed to uproot extremism and terrorism from the soil of Bangladesh. Bangladesh, under the leadership of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is working closely with its neighbors and the United States in eliminating extremism and terrorism within its border and beyond.

Ambassador Ziauddin also informed the Congressman that the present government put high priority on women empowerment and education including on modern madrasa education. In this context, he mentioned that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who represents the voice of women in South Asia and is the only Muslim woman leader among the OIC member countries, has been relentlessly working on education and empowerment of women in Bangladesh. He said that 90 percent of four million workers in the RMG industry are women. These women have stepped out of their homes and are contributing to poverty alleviation, literacy, and above all weakening extremism and reinforcing government efforts to eliminate extremism and terrorism. In a way, women are transforming the society into a progressive one, which is a solution to rid the country of all forms of extremism and radicalization.

Regarding DFQF access, the Ambassador told him that Bangladesh is the largest apparel exporter to the USA. Yet it feels neglected as an LDC not having the DFQF access of its products to the US market while all the 34 African LDCs (AGOA) are enjoying this facility. He

also informed that the EU is providing DFQF access to all 48 LDCs to its market on EBA (Everything but Arms) policy. Therefore, he urged that the US should consider our case favourably.

Mr. Sander Levin, recalling his visit to Bangladesh in 2013, informed that he is well aware of the Bangladesh economy, the Rana Plaza tragedy, and the issue of workers' safety and security. He said that US wants to see Bangladesh as an active apparel exporting country and for this Bangladesh should take proper actions.

Ambassador Ziauddin briefed him about the increase in labour union registration, appointment of inspectors etc. He also informed the Congressman about the government initiative to establish new Special Economic Zones in Bangladesh to attract new foreign investment.

Congressman Levin expressed his sincere willingness to stand beside Bangladesh and thanked the Ambassador for his briefing. Mr. Toufique Hasan, Counselor (Political) of the Embassy, accompanied the Ambassador during the meeting.

