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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Hasina, Obama institutionalized Dhaka-Washington Relations: Ambassador Ziauddin**

Eds: Repeating with an insertion after para three and minor change in last para

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Barack Obama have institutionalized Dhaka-Washington bilateral relations paving ways for holding partnership dialogue, security and military dialogues and trade and investment dialogue on regular basis for mutual benefit of the two nations.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Mohammad Ziauddin made the remarks while delivering a lecture on "Bangladesh's Policy Priorities & Its Relationships with the United States and Regional Power" at Harvard Kennedy School of Government on Tuesday.

Cathryn Cluver, Executive Director of the Future of Diplomacy Project at Harvard Kennedy School of Government, conducted the lecture.

The Ambassador said Prime Minister Hasina has taken personal interest to work with President Obama in Equal Futures Partnership Initiative pledging a world with equal opportunities for women in all spheres of human endeavours.

'Collaboration is also very strong in counter-terrorism. Both countries condemn mindless violence and extremism... Both believe violence has no space in democracy.'

The envoy said Prime Minister Hasina and President Obama consider each other as important partners in democratic governance, integration with global economy, disaster management, climate change adaptation, food security, human rights, religious freedom and global peacekeeping.

Bangladesh has also been able to maintain equal robust relationship with China, India, Japan, Russia and the European Union, he said, adding this was possible because all of these big powers respect Bangladesh's stance for 'Friendship with all and malice towards none' and believes Bangladesh to be a friend that needs them all to progress and prosper.

On Bangladesh's role in South Asia, Ziauddin said Bangladesh believes cooperation is imperative for optimum utilization of resources and thus development, peace and stability of the region.

He said Dhaka's efforts are focused on strengthening SAARC, BIMSTEC, BCIM-EC. Lately, BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) has been progressing in developing infrastructure, trade, joint hydro- power project and people to people contact.

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On relations with India, the Ambassador recalled India's great assistance in giving shelter to 10 million Bangladeshi refugees in 1971 and allowing the Bangladesh government in exile to operate from its territory till victory of the country's War of Liberation.

'Bangladesh, under Sheikh Hasina, considers India as our true friend,' he said. Sheikh Hasina as the Prime Minister made all efforts to consolidate Dhaka-Delhi bilateral relations while the Indian leadership was equally responsive, he observed.

Bangladesh and India, the Ambassador said, have also been working closely in countering terrorism in the region.

He said 'Dhaka-New Delhi relationship is its best,' and both are involved in sub-regional and greater regional connectivity initiatives. Energy connectivity has recently been added as a new dimension to the bilateral relations.

Ziauddin noted that maritime and land boundaries demarcation between the two countries have been solved peacefully.

With China, the Ambassador said Bangladesh has developed good relationship in many fronts over the years. China is Bangladesh's largest trading partner. The two way trade was US\$ 9 billion in 2014. China is also a major investor in Bangladesh.

Ziauddin said two economic zones have been earmarked for China and Chinese investors. China has been for decades a dependable partner in Bangladesh's infrastructure.

Besides, he said Dhaka receives military aid and training and technology from China.

About Bangladesh-USA bilateral trade, the Ambassador said Bangladesh is working on duty free quota free access of its products to the American market as being enjoyed by some other LDCs. 'We seek equal treatment of all LDCs by the US as is the case with the European Union.'

He said Bangladesh national airlines, the Biman, is procuring 10 aircrafts from Boeing, six of which have been delivered. US oil and gas exploration giant, Chevron and many American companies like the Ellicott Dredgers, GEC are engaged in Bangladesh.

Last year's FDI from the USA to Bangladesh was about US\$ 600 million while bilateral trade reached US\$ 7 billion.

Referring to Bangladesh's economic performance, Ziauddin said Bangladesh's GDP has grown from US\$ 6 billion in 1971 to US\$ 200 billion, literacy raised from 25 percent to 75 percent, life expectancy from 47 years to 72 years.

He said major MDGs, particularly on gender parity, infant and maternal mortality, and reduction of poverty achieved ahead of 2015 deadline; annual GDP growth rate is expected to be 7.05 percent, export earnings increased to US\$ 31 billion, remittances to US\$ 15 billion and foreign exchange reserve to US\$ 28 billion.

'These achievements have caught the imagination of the world and been duly recognized by Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan with Bangladesh listed in their respective lists of "next Eleven" and "Emerging Five," the Ambassador told the Harvard students.

Students and fellows of Harvard Kennedy School of Government attended the lecture. During QA session, the Ambassador responded to questions on Bangladesh government initiatives after the Rana Plaza disaster, adverse impact of climate change, countering violent extremism, secularism and recent killings in Bangladesh, etc.

The Ambassador was accompanied by Md. Shameem Ahsan, Bangladesh Consul General to New York and Toufique Hasan, Counsellor (Political) of Bangladesh Embassy to Washington, DC.



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