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PRESS RELEASE

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Bangladesh, USA important partners in democratic governance, says Ambassador Ziauddin

Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States Mohammad Ziauddin has said Dhaka and Washington consider each other as important partners in democratic governance and integration with global economy.

“Bangladesh and the USA have, over four decades, built a strong bilateral relationship based on common values and mutual respect,” he told faculty members, scholars and students at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana Monday.

Delivering a lecture on “Bangladesh’s policy priorities and its relationship with the United States and the regional powers” at Keough School of Global Affairs, the Ambassador said the bilateral relations with Washington have been institutionalized by the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina while officials of the two countries hold regular dialogues on trade, security and military affairs. Bangladesh also participates in President Obama’s four initiatives, especially on health, food security and climate change.

Ambassador Ziauddin said both Bangladesh and the USA condemn mindless violence and extremism in the name of ideology or political expression as “both believe violence has no space in democracy.”

He said the USA has become Bangladesh’s largest single export destination and the bilateral trade reached US\$ 7 billion last year. The USA is also Bangladesh’s second largest development partner and largest investor. Last year FDI from the USA to Bangladesh was US\$ 560 million, accounting for one-fourth of total global FDI into Bangladesh. “We’re working on Duty Free Quota Free access of our goods to the US market as enjoyed by some other LDCs,” he said.

The Ambassador noted that Bangladesh has been able to maintain equal robust relationship with the USA, China, India, Japan, Russia and the European Union because all these big powers respect Bangladesh’s stance for friendship with all and malice towards none.

In South Asia, he said Bangladesh believes cooperation is imperative for optimum utilization of resources and thus development, peace and stability of the region. Bangladesh focused on all regional organizations like the BIMSTEC, BCIM-EC. Recently, he said BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) has been progressing in developing infrastructures, trade and joint hydro-power project.

Referencing close ties between Bangladesh and India, Ambassador Ziauddin said the two neighboring countries are interconnected by road, rail, water and air. Both are working closely in counter-terrorism in the region while energy connectivity has recently been added as a new dimension in the bilateral relations, he said, adding the peaceful settlement of maritime and land boundary demarcations set a unique precedent, making the relationship is at its best.

On Dhaka-Beijing relations, the Ambassador said Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a milestone visit to Bangladesh on October 14 when as many as 27 deals worth \$24 billion were signed. The two-way trade was \$9 billion in 2014. China is a major investor in Bangladesh. Two economic zones have been earmarked for China and Chinese investors.

As an LDC steeped with multifarious problems, the Ambassador said Bangladesh has been fortunate to have many friends who enable the country to fight poverty and improve the overall well-being of its people. Bangladesh's GDP, he said, has grown from \$6 billion in 1971 to \$ 220 billion in 2016; literacy rate raised from 25 percent to 75 percent; life expectancy from 47 years to 72 years, poverty level reduced to 24 percent and annual GDP growth has crossed 7 percent in the last fiscal year. Bangladesh is now the 33rd largest economy in the world in terms of Purchase Power Parity. It is also the second largest supplier of apparel in the world.

Outgoing UN secretary general Ban ki-Moon inspired by these developments frequently mentioned in his speeches that "Bangladesh is a role model of development." Ambassador Ziauddin said Bangladesh now confidently looks forward to graduating to a middle income country by 2021.

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