

**PRESS RELEASE ON THE VISIT TO USA OF THE HON'BLE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS, PROF AQM BADRUDDOZA CHOWDHURY  
NOVEMBER 4-6, 2001**

Foreign Minister Professor AQM Bodruddoza Chowdhury met with the US Secretary of State Mr. Colin Powell at the State Department on November 6, 2001. Those present included Mr. Reaz Rahman, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Shamsheer M. Chowdhury, BB, Foreign Secretary, Ambassador of Bangladesh Ahmad Tariq Karim, Ms. Nasim Firdaus, Director General (America and Pacific) and Mr. Mustafa Kamal, Minister & DCM, Bangladesh Embassy Washington from the Bangladesh side. Ms Christina Rocca, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Mr. Steven Young, Director (PAB) and Mr. Todd Holmstrom, Bangladesh Desk Officer were present from the US side. The Foreign Minister was formally welcomed by Mr. Colin Powell. He expressed his happiness at the timely meeting which took place within a month of the formation of the newly elected government in Bangladesh. The meeting, which lasted for almost an hour, was held in a very friendly and cordial atmosphere.

Hon'ble Foreign Minister and the Secretary of State discussed the existing friendly relations between Bangladesh and the United States and agreed to further strengthening of those relations in the future for mutual benefit. The Secretary of State recognized that Bangladesh was a moderate Muslim democracy and a role model for others in the practice of democracy.

The Secretary of State expressed his deep appreciation for Bangladesh's support in the fight against terrorism and its commitment to peace keeping around the world. He stated that the US would look forward to Bangladesh's continued support in peace keeping including in Afghanistan, particularly in the rebuilding and reconstruction efforts. He also appreciated Bangladesh's humanitarian assistance for the Afghan refugees. Prof Chowdhury reiterated Bangladesh's total commitment towards the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations

During the meeting the Foreign Minister presented the overall economic situation of Bangladesh, particularly the dire impact in the aftermath of the attack on the US on September 11. He laid special emphasis on the plight of the ready-made garment (RMG) industry in Bangladesh and passionately argued for US support for quota-free & duty-free access of apparel and other textile products into the US market. He also said that the enactment of TDA 2000 has put Bangladeshi RMG exporters in a disadvantageous position in their exports to the United States. The Secretary of State took note of the persuasive presentation made by the Foreign Minister to Secretary Powell. The Secretary of State said that US Government was sensitive to the concerns of Bangladesh and that efforts will be made to consider the Bangladesh request. He, however, said that the economic situation was shaky even in the United States and cautioned that right now the US domestic textile lobby was strongly against granting of concessions to any country when the US economy itself was in a downward trend.

The Foreign Minister conveyed to the Secretary of State that his government's commitment to democracy. He said that democracy was taking deep roots in Bangladesh. He underlined that the focus of the government was poverty alleviation. He said that the people in general want to see the fruits of democracy, which are economic progress and a better quality of life.

The Foreign Minister emphasized the need for strengthening cooperation in South Asia and for collective efforts at improving the socio-economic conditions of the people of the region. In this context he informed the Secretary of State that Bangladesh has played a catalytic role in forming SAARC. He informed the Secretary of State that the next SAARC Summit would be held in Katmandu from January 4-6, 2002 with full participation. He underlined that this would be the first SAARC Summit of the millennium, which would hopefully initiate the process of revitalizing

the regional organization. This was described as a major positive development. He also made reference to the existing SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and hoped that the Summit would lead to collective efforts on issues of terrorism. The Foreign Minister said that the Special Envoys of both India and Pakistan recently visited Dhaka and has assured the newly elected government of their respective government's desire to work closely with Bangladesh in all areas. He also informed the Secretary of State of the recent visit of the IOC Secretary General to Dhaka.

The Foreign Minister raised the issue of regularizing undocumented Bangladeshis living in the United States and sought the understanding and assistance of the US government for their legalization. The Secretary of State said that the US basically wants to remain an open society but the events of September 11 have forced the Administration to install stringent screening mechanism and a tightening of the system.

The Secretary of State looked forward to working closely with the Foreign Minister. He thanked the Foreign Minister for his visit as well as for the invitation extended to him for his visit to Bangladesh.

After the talks the Foreign Minister spoke to members of the US media and briefed them on his meeting with Secretary Powell.

Earlier in the day the Foreign Minister, accompanied by State Minister Reaz Rahman, Foreign Secretary and the Bangladesh Ambassador met with the Deputy National Security Adviser Steven Hadley at the White House. He also exchanged greetings with National Security Adviser Dr. Condoleeza Rice.

(Shamsher M. Chowdhury, BB)  
Foreign Secretary