Bangladesh committed to sweeping labour reforms: Chief Adviser

BSS – Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus today said the interim government is committed to carrying out sweeping labour reforms in an effort to attract more foreign buyers to the country.

The chief adviser made the comments when a big United States labour and brand delegation called on him to discuss labour issues at his office at Tejgaon.

“We want to make our labour laws at par with global standards. It is my commitment,” Prof Yunus told the delegation.

He said the interim government has appointed a special envoy only to reform the country’s labour laws and to address the concerns raised by the local and international labour rights groups, the International Labor Organisation and the western nations.

The delegation was led by Thea Mei Lee, the deputy undersecretary of the US Department of Labour, and Kelly Fay Rodriguez, Special Representative for International Labour Affairs of the US.

The two senior officials said the US, global labour rights groups, and top international brands that buy clothing and footwear from Bangladesh, back Professor Yunus’s move to reform labour laws and create worker-friendly conditions in Bangladesh factories.

“All of these are wonderful testaments” to what the Professor Yunus-led interim government has done for the labour sector in the past three and a half months, Kelly Fay Rodriguez said,

referring to the steps, including the 18-point agreement signed between the government and the local unions.

The US officials called for union rights in the factories and reviews of wages every year to cushion millions of garment and footwear workers from inflationary pressures.

“It is good for business and good for the economy,” Thea May Lee said, speaking about the benefits of decent minimum wages in garment factories.

She said worker unions are “a training ground for democracy.”

Senior officials of three top US brands, PVH, Calvin Klein, and Gap Inc, were also present at the meeting.

Michael Bride, Senior Vice President of PVH Corp., said they backed labour reforms in Bangladesh, saying they supported similar efforts in Cambodia.

Prof Yunus urged the brands to declare the price hike of their orders every January so that the manufacturers in Bangladesh can raise worker wages accordingly.

US Charge d’affaires Meghan Bouldeb was also at the meeting. She said the US fully supports Prof Yunus’s sweeping labour reforms.

“We want to be partners with you,” she said.