

# Congressman: Peru trade deal priority

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LIMA, Peru --

Congress will give priority treatment to approval of a trade pact with Peru when it reconvenes in September, the head of the House Ways and Means Committee said Monday.

"It is a priority when we return to the Congress in September," Rep. Charles Rangel, a Democrat from New York, told reporters after meeting with President Alan Garcia.

Rangel was accompanied on his visit to Lima, Peru by Democratic Reps. Sander Levin from Michigan and Allyson Schwartz from Pennsylvania.

Rangel said he was bringing "the total support" of the leaders of both parties in the House and the Senate for "for moving this free trade agreement forward."

Peru and U.S. trade negotiators agreed on a trade pact in April 2006 and it was ratified by Peru's Congress two months later. But its approval has been held up in the Democrat-controlled Congress, where some lawmakers worry that pending trade deals with Peru and other countries could jeopardize American jobs.

Peru has been working to appease Democratic congressmen about their doubts over what they see as a lack of protection for Peruvian workers.

Rangel said he had been favorably impressed with Garcia's commitment to labor rights.