World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim’s Comments at a Press Conference with Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Akhilesh Yadav

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World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim
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Transcript

DR. KIM: Thank you very much. It’s a great honor for me to be here in Uttar Pradesh. This is my first official trip to India, and I made it a point to come and visit the largest state in India, and home to 80 percent of the people who are living in extreme poverty.

So, in my eight months of being President of the World Bank Group, I’ve spent a lot of time talking with people inside the World Bank in trying to craft for ourselves a fundamental mission: What is our mission? What is our strategy? What is it that we really want to accomplish as the World Bank Group?

And we’ve coalesced around two fundamental ideas. One is an end to poverty. So, sometime within our lifetimes, within this generation, we think that we can end poverty. In ending poverty, we think that, for once and for all, we will remove this stain from the consciousness of all of us in the world. It is not right that people live on less than our level, which is $1.25 per day, and 80 percent of those people live here in Uttar Pradesh.
There is no way that we can be successful in achieving the aim of ending poverty without being successful here in Uttar Pradesh.

The other issue that we’re very focused on is what we call shared prosperity. In other words, we are very focused on economic growth, which leads to jobs. We know that also--we know that, in developing countries, 90 percent of all jobs are created in the private sector. So, we need growth in the private sector everywhere, especially here in Uttar Pradesh.

But when we talked about shared prosperity, what we mean is that the growth in the economy has to be shared with young people, with people left out of the economy, with women, and even with future generations.

As you know, with the monsoons here in India, climate change is a reality that we all must deal with. And so, any form of economic growth has to take into account that we have to share the prosperity we have today with future generations, very specifically with our children.

Now, we had a very good discussion this morning on the number of different projects that we’ve taken on. We’re very committed to Uttar Pradesh. We’re starting with very specific projects, and as they find success, we look forward to expanding into other areas.

We have a very specific way of working at the World Bank Group, very committed to ending poverty, very committed to focusing on marginalized populations, very committed to focusing on women.

We also have safeguards to protect the environment to ensure that we don’t displace people in a way that’s damaging to their lives.

And also, we have very high standards in terms of the governments that we work with. We will maintain those standards, we will maintain those commitments here in UP, but we are very optimistic that we can accomplish great things here with the dynamic new leadership of this great state.

Thank you.

**UTTAR PRADESH GOVERNMENT MODERATOR:** and the Chief Minister will now take a few questions from the media.
CHIEF MINISTER YADAV: [Speaking in Hindi.]

QUESTION FROM JOURNALIST (NAME NOT GIVEN): what has been your analysis how the funds has been utilized and what is the money you have [unclear] hasn't been properly utilized or not.

DR. KIM: Yes. Well, if you want an assessment of specific projects, we can give them to you. My Country Director will be happy to give them to you, but let me just say a couple of things.

Every single World Bank project is audited. We feel that we have absolutely the best system to detect fraud and corruption of any organization in the world.

And so, the project in UP, like every other project, will be audited in the same careful way.

And so far the project has been going well.

WORLD BANK INDIA COUNTRY DIRECTOR ONNO RUHL: I would just like to point out that you probably are familiar with the Sodic Lands Reclamation Project. It's a project where it's not only audited. You can actually go into fields and see the results of this project. So, it is possible in this stage to have engagements that we consider flagship engagements along with the Government of India and get results, and that's the way we would like to keep working.

QUESTION FROM JOURNALIST: So, in a nutshell, can you say the experience of the World Bank has been [unclear]—

DR. KIM: Yes, so far--yes, so far, positive. So far, the experience has been very positive.

QUESTION FROM JOURNALIST: There is nothing outstanding from the past government? Have you been getting the return of your investment? Have you [unclear]—

DR. KIM: There are no current issues. There are no current issues.

CHIEF MINISTER YADAV: [Speaking in Hindi.]
QUESTION: Dr. Kim, [unclear] have you identified new areas for potential development in Uttar Pradesh?

DR. KIM: We're exploring several areas, but there's no final decisions that have been made.

QUESTION: [Unclear]

DR. KIM: The specific ones? Okay.

RUHL: We have advanced discussions in the irrigation sector as well as we have a new engagement in the health sector where we're hoping to change the system and we have exploratory discussions on extending the Sodic Lands Project to [unclear] lands, as well as on roads and pro-poor tourism, a way to let tourism create jobs for poor people. Those are the specific areas where we have advanced discussions, in addition to our private sector colleagues from IFC who will also work on the tourism sector are working in the sugar sector in a very important engagement, as well as in financial inclusion and housing finance.

QUESTION: [Unclear]

RUHL: The objective of the Kanpur visit is for President Kim to appreciate firsthand the role of urban transformation that India and Uttar Pradesh are undergoing. So, he will be able to see the village, then go to a fairly urban area, and then go to a poor neighborhood Kanpur to understand how people's lives are impacted by the transition that India is undergoing [unclear] Uttar Pradesh and understand how we could support fighting poverty by facilitating that transition in a positive way. And he will also end up at the banks of the Ganga to have a firsthand appreciation of the issues related to the efforts to clean up the Ganga River.

QUESTION FROM JOURNALIST: Dr. Kim, I am from The Economic Times. Did you, in your meeting with Chief Minister discuss the possible opening of FDI and retail in Uttar Pradesh because the government there is--

DR. KIM: No, no, no.

QUESTION: That didn't come up?
DR. KIM: No.

QUESTION: [Off microphone.]

DR. KIM: You know, I spent the day yesterday meeting with government officials, including the Finance Minister and Prime Minister, and I can tell you that, throughout the government, there is an extreme focus on putting in place those elements that will lead to growth in the future.

Now, it's a complicated formulator. This is an enormous country with many different states. And so, what I'm understanding from the top leaders in the Indian Government are, one, they understand that there is a lot of investment still that needs to be done. There is something like a $1 trillion infrastructure deficit in India over the next five years. And the government plans on moving forward aggressively with both public funds and private funds.

We were told that 53 percent of that money is going to come from public funds, 47 percent from private funds. This is a new, courageous, and absolutely correct, in our view, approach to filling the infrastructure deficit. It won't be possible to fill that deficit just with public money. We think they're going in exactly the right direction. At the same time, while investing in that form of infrastructure, I also see a very clear commitment to investing in human capital; so, through improving the health care programs, through improving the educational system, through beginning to provide social protection programs, conditional cash transfer programs. We believe that the Indian Government is focused on exactly the right things, investment in infrastructure with the support of the private sector, and a continued increase--more efficient and focused investment in human capital. Those are the elements that I think will get India back to growth.

UTTAR PRADESH GOVERNMENT MODERATOR: Just one more question.

QUESTION FROM JOURNALIST: One question for you, you must have read the morning paper, that the Chief Minister has given away laptops yesterday to [unclear] students, what is your impression of the Chief Minister using his [unclear]--

CHIEF MINISTER YADAV: [In Hindi]
QUESTION FROM JOURNALIST: What impression will you take back of the Chief Minister? He--I mean, there's an impression that he wants to [unclear] forward thinking person. Do you agree with that perspective?

DR. KIM: Look, well, I just met him this morning and we did talk about the project with the laptops.

You know, there's just definitely no question that technology will be part of the future for young people in India, and I think this effort to get top technology into the hands of young people is very important.

Now, one of the things that we've learned over the years, and the Chief Minister understands this very well, is that the technology is one thing, but then the connectivity and the software are what's really important, and the ability to use the technology and the software so that young people actually learn.

And I'm convinced that the Chief Minister understands this. I also know that as the youngest Chief Minister in all of India, he has made very strong commitments to good governance and to be very forward-looking for the State of Uttar Pradesh.

Both of those things, of course, we welcome wholeheartedly.