

Statement to the Media on President Jim Yong Kim's Visit to Bangladesh

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World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Dhaka, Bangladesh

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you for coming today. I've had two full days in Bangladesh to both celebrate the country's accomplishments in dramatically reducing poverty for End Poverty Day, and to travel to the Barisal District to take a close look at how the country is adapting to challenges posed by climate change.

I've been very impressed with what I've seen in Bangladesh – the many examples of innovation in fighting poverty, empowering women, and battling climate change; the warmth from so many people who have welcomed me; and the strength of your leadership inside and outside government, including many who fought for the independence of this nation. I've seen history unfold before my eyes, and I can see a bright future for the people of this country.

Bangladesh and the World Bank Group share a close bond. Bangladesh is the largest recipient of our IDA fund – the fund for the poorest countries – with more than \$24 billion dollars in financing over the past 45 years. And the World Bank Group is Bangladesh's largest development partner. Our relationship is intertwined. We learn from you, and you from us.

Our engagements through IDA and with IFC – our private sector arm – have increased significantly in the past five years. Total IDA commitment stands today at \$9.7 billion dollars, up from \$4 billion dollars at the end of fiscal year 2012. And our IFC investments this past fiscal year totaled \$635 million dollars, up from \$37 million dollars in fiscal year 2012. Both IDA and IFC financing are expected to increase substantially in the coming years.

Today – on my first trip to Bangladesh, and the first of a World Bank Group president to Bangladesh in nearly a decade – I’m announcing a \$2 billion dollar commitment for climate-related projects in the next three years. I met with people today who talked about the threat of cyclones and flooding, and I also visited a family benefitting from a solar panel on their home. Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, and we must do all we can to support the government in its efforts to adapt to this growing threat.

While Bangladesh has made great advances on these issues and many others, the country still faces many obstacles to reach its goals to move from low-middle-income status to middle income status, and to end extreme poverty by 2030.

We see three areas that the government can address in order to be successful. The first is to enact policy reforms that improve the business climate. Now, foreign direct investment in Bangladesh lags behind its neighbors; if the country attracts more investment from the private sector, it will mobilize funds necessary for infrastructure projects. Second, as the government correctly points out in its 7th Five-Year Plan, the country needs to strengthen its institutional capacity. And third, the Five-Year Plan also importantly emphasizes the need to strengthen governance, which includes building a strong civil service, judiciary, public banks, tax collection and the Anti-Corruption Commission. We share Bangladesh’s zero tolerance for corruption, believing strongly that any funds diverted from beneficiaries amounts to stealing from the poor.

I have greatly enjoyed my two days in Bangladesh, and I have learned many things about your history and your dreams for the future. My team at the World Bank Group and I look forward to doing all we can to support Bangladesh’s development priorities, reducing poverty further, creating more and better jobs, and working to build a more vibrant private sector that invests in this country. Thank you very much. I’m very happy to take your questions.