

# Bank rebuts The Tribunal charges on website

By SONAL KELLOGG

New Delhi, Sept. 27: Rattled by the allegations on their operations in India made by economists and social activists in an Independent People's Tribunal, World Bank has posted their defence on their website.

The World Bank maintains that it is a development bank and that its programme in India is guided by the country's own development agenda. Within this broad agenda, the World Bank focuses on areas where it can contribute the most, the statement said. The World Bank said that though they agreed to participate in the Independent People's Tribunal which concluded on Monday, it did not do so as the "organisers insisted that the bank make itself accountable to the tribunal judgment process". The World Bank, therefore, "did not participate under the circumstances".

One of the tribunal's organiser, Deepika D'souza said that the World Bank was currently not accountable to anyone and they had tried to get the bank to be accountable for their programme in India but they refused to participate.

The bank replying to several of the allegations made against them at the tribunal about their working and the conditionality which they impose when loans are given by the World Bank for various development projects. In reply to the allegation about encouraging privatisation, the World Bank said that they "believe that development needs and priorities vary widely between countries depending on a variety of factors.... Privatisation is only one of many options available." Further the World Bank said, "India today, like many developing countries, is facing a large and growing shortfall in the provision of electricity, water, transportation, schools, hospitals, etc. To meet the rapid growing needs of the people, the World Bank believes that both the public and private sectors have important roles to play."

Further, in reply to the allegation that the bank promotes privatisation of basic services like water supply, electricity, healthcare and schooling said, "The World

Bank believes that there is no single approach that can improve basic services as varied as water, power, health, and education."

It said that though the government invests a great deal of money and effort to provide basic services to the people, in the face of growing demand for services of good quality and the often weak performance of government service providers, the private sector has often stepped in to fill the gap. This has led to the de-facto privatisation of many services.

The World Bank further said, "Given the large role already played by non-government service providers, we believe that it makes sense to consider how these providers could contribute."

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