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On June 2, a letter signed by over 1,200 legislators from 19 nations addressed to World Bank president Lewis Preston was made public. The lawmakers called on the World Bank to increase lending for poverty reduction throughout the world. The appeal originated with US Rep. Tony P. Hall (D-OH), chair of the House Select Committee on Hunger. Aides said it had been signed by 259 other members of the US Congress, 309 members of the British parliament, 231 from Germany and 172 from Japan. The legislators asked for an increase in World Bank lending for health care to 5% of total loans, equivalent to about US$1.2 billion for 1993-1994; a substantial increase in loans for primary schooling; and, more loans for low-cost improvements in water treatment and distribution. Next, the lawmakers recommended that World Bank anti-poverty loans should be part of the borrower government's comprehensive strategy to reduce the number of poor people. Comprehensive approaches would include changing policies that exacerbate or maintain poverty. Policy areas of particular importance in reducing or increasing poverty are taxes, subsidies, military and social welfare spending, land ownership, and credit for the poor. The letter said, "Comprehensive anti-poverty loans would be particularly useful in the large South Asian countries where about half the world's poor live, as well as in large African countries." The World Bank, the largest source of development assistance to the Third World, lends over US$24 billion per year. (Basic data from Associated Press, Chinese news service Xinhua, 06/02/92)

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