

## World Bank steps in to defuse IL&FS Ethiopia crisis

Asks Ethiopian Roads Authority to resolve the issue at the earliest

**NANDANA JAMES**

Mumbai, January 22

In a bid to end the crisis facing IL&FS employees in Ethiopia, the World Bank has asked the Ethiopian Roads Authority to look for a resolution at the earliest. The project, being executed by an IL&FS joint venture in Ethiopia, is funded by the World Bank.

Asked by *BusinessLine* about the hostage, imprisonment and salary troubles faced by the Indian employees in Ethiopia, James Robert Markland, Senior Transport Specialist and the World Bank's Task Team Leader for the project, said: "We would

comment that the safety and fair treatment of all those working on World Bank-financed projects is of utmost importance to us. We are closely monitoring the situation and have requested the Ethiopian Roads Authority to work to resolve the issue as soon as possible."

ITNL-Elsamex is a joint venture between IL&FS Transportation Networks Ltd and Elsamex S.A. This Indo-Spanish joint venture is engaged in road projects for the Ethiopian Roads Authority.

Of the 44 Indians working for the joint venture, 36 were called back to India and none

The road project being executed by an IL&FS joint venture in Ethiopia is funded by the World Bank

of them has been paid for the last 6-8 months, according to Rajesh Davuluri, an IL&FS employee in Ethiopia.

### Not paid

Out of the eight Indian employees remaining in Ethiopia, four have been held hostage by the local employees since November 24 in the Bure-Lot 3 camp. The other four employees are in Addis, around 500 km away from Bure. None of them has been paid since July.

Responding to a query on the issue, the Indian embassy in Addis Ababa said, "The Ministry of External Affairs and Embassy of India in Addis Ababa have accorded this matter the highest priority and are actively pursuing it with the Ethiopian authorities and IL&FS/ITNL management for an early resolution of this issue. We have consistently impressed on IL&FS/ITNL to resolve this at the earliest. We have equally impressed upon Ethiopian authorities to ensure safety, security and the early release of these Indian employees in Ethiopia.

"IL&FS/ITNL has also been advised to fulfil their obligations towards their employees, including Indians," it said.