

# 'Amcu not happy with offer'

**Dineo Faku**

THE ASSOCIATION of Mine-workers and Construction Union (Amcu) appears poised to reject the latest pay offer tabled by platinum producers, as the union does not believe it goes far enough to resolve the dispute that has disrupted production for three months.

Although Amcu has yet to give a formal response to the employers, early indications yesterday suggested that the offer would not be deemed acceptable, according to labour union and industry officials.

The latest offer was tabled on Thursday ahead of the

## Union wants more before ending strike – Impala Talks between labour, employers to resume today

Easter long weekend, a time when most of the migrant miners head home to their families.

“Amcu is not happy with the offer; they did not accept it and wanted more,” Johan Theron, a spokesman for Impala Platinum, said yesterday.

“We indicated that we cannot offer more without putting shafts at risk of closure... Our willingness to pay more must

be balanced with our ability to pay our employees more money,” he added.

Impala and Anglo American Platinum (Amplats) announced on Thursday that they had tabled a revised wage offer in an attempt to end the strike in the platinum belt, which accounts for more than half of the world’s supplies.

Lonmin is expected to issue a statement on the revised

offer today.

When contacted for comment yesterday, Amcu president Joseph Mathunjwa said a statement would be issued today.

Under the revised offer, employers proposed that the cash remuneration for entry-level underground employees would rise to R12 500 a month, or R150 000 a year, by July 2017.

To achieve this, the cash

remuneration for these employees would rise by between 7.5 percent and 10 percent across various bands.

Cash remuneration includes allowances such as the living out allowance and holiday leave allowance, but excludes medical and retirement benefits, and any bonuses.

Amcu’s core demand is for a basic wage of R12 500 a month for entry-level

underground staff, compared with the current minimum of R4 000 to R5 500 a month.

Talks between platinum producers and Amcu are scheduled to resume as planned today. Amplats did not immediately respond to requests for comment yesterday about what feedback it had received from the union.

A spokeswoman for Lonmin said Amcu had neither accepted nor rejected the offer as of last night.

Outright rejection of the offer would be a big blow for the platinum industry and the country at a time when there is already growing concern that

the prolonged strike might eventually lead to the closure of some of the mines.

“There has been no formal response yet,” Theron said yesterday. “We are scheduled to meet again tomorrow [today].”

“It is not easy to communicate the new offer over a long weekend.”

Last week Amcu hired 100 buses to transport striking members home for the Easter weekend.

About 70 000 Amcu members have been off work since January 23, costing the industry R14 billion in lost revenue and employees R6.2bn in lost wages. **Page 13**

# Marikana inquiry faces hurdle

Commission probing miners deaths may hit a snag if families of victims reject ruling on key police witness

DUDU DUBE

THE Marikana Commission of Inquiry could face another hurdle if the 270 miners who were injured and arrested decide not to accept the conditions under which the man who will incriminate them testifies.

Judge Ian Farlam ruled last week that police witness, Mr X, could testify through video streaming, but with the miners and families of the deceased present in the commission.

Lawyers for the miners said they are yet to consult with their clients, but that it could go either way.

The SAPS had filed an application asking that the miners and the families of the 34 dead miners be excluded from hearing the testimony of Mr X, who is in witness protection. But Farlam, although ordering that his identity be not revealed to the public, ruled that the miners and families be excluded from that order.

Lawyer Simon Tlhatlha said they had not had the opportunity to consult with their clients since the ruling was made as most of their clients had gone home for the Easter holidays.

“The ruling was a victory because we will know the identity of Mr X and our clients will be allowed full access. We are still going to consult with them and they could say that they want him to take the ‘hot seat’ like all the other witnesses. If that is the instruction, we will have to take the ruling into review,” he said.

Mr X was among the 3000 Lonmin

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**The ruling was a victory because we will know the identity of Mr X and our clients will be allowed access**

mine workers who embarked on an unprotected wage strike on August 10, 2012. Within seven days of the protests, 45 people including two police officers were killed.

Mr X agreed to be a SAPS witness and is expected to incriminate a large number of his colleagues in his testimony.

In a supplementary-statement he gave to the commission, Mr X claimed that the miners each paid R20 for the utilisation of transport to fetch two sangomas from the Eastern Cape.

The sangomas performed rituals they claimed would make the miners immune to police gunshots, for they were paid R1000.

Mr X also claimed that they were given instructions by the sangoma Alton Joja and their leaders to ensure that police fire at them first.

“The instructions were to wait for the

police to first fire at us before launching an attack on police, and if possible, to conduct ourselves in a manner that would provoke the police, resulting in the police firing at first,” he said.

He said that they were instructed to approach the police in a crouching manner. “That would make bullets, if fired by the police, miss us as we would be invisible to the police,” he said.

Joja, who was also going to testify in the commission was assassinated at his home in Bizana, Eastern Cape, early last year.

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# Agreement in sight

By ELLEKIA DIRE

AMCU general secretary Jeff Mphahlele said talks with platinum producers are scheduled for today.

“We hope settlement will be reached soon.”

Lonmin Platinum have joined Anglo American and Impala Platinum in offering to increase the monthly wages of the lowest paid underground worker to R12 500 a month by July 2017.

Lonmin spokeswoman Charmane Russell said the offer covers basic salary along with holiday and living out allowances and other benefits.

The platinum producers increased the pay offer as the strike that has crippled operations and brought hardship to employees and their families entered its 13th week.

Since the strike began in January they have said they cannot afford Amcu wage demands.

In March the union said it would give the mining houses four years to achieve the demand from an earlier wage agreement in 2013.

# Miners lose R6m as talks resume

TALKS between platinum producers and union Amcu are expected to resume today following a new wage offer tabled for the striking mineworkers.

Producers Lonmin, Anglo American Platinum (Amplats) and Impala Platinum (Implats) announced the revised offer on Thursday, extending to 2017, with represented increases of between 7.5% and 10% across the various bands of employees, with relevant allowances rising in line with inflation.

Implats has not received for-

mal feedback from the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) since the new offer was tabled last week, spokesman Johan Theron said yesterday.

The proposal would see entry level underground employees' minimum cash remuneration, comprising basic wages and holiday, living out and other allowances, rise to R12 500 a month, or R150 000 a annum by July 2017.

Cash remuneration excluded medical and retirement bene-

fits, and any bonuses. Amcu's latest publicised demand has been for a basic wage of R12 500 within three years.

The union launched a strike fund last week, and appealed for assistance for workers, who have lost an estimated R6-million in pay since the strike started on January 23.

Spokeswoman Mpumi Sithole said Amplats would also be part of today's meeting, to be facilitated by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration.

Lonmin could not be reached for comment.

The 12-week strike has so far resulted in R6-million in employees' lost earnings and R13.6-million in companies' revenue lost, according to the Chamber of Mines' website.

Thousands of Amcu members downed tools on January 23 to push for a basic monthly salary of R12 500.

The companies rejected Amcu's revised demand that the R12 500 could be achieved over four years. — *BDlive*