

# Xstrata-Merafe to boost output at Boshhoek plant

**Rustenburg** – The Xstrata-Merafe joint venture aims to increase output at the Boshhoek ferrochrome smelter complex near Rustenburg by between 10% and 12% by 2012, operations manager Francois Coetzee said on Tuesday (30 August 2011).

The plant currently produces about 240 000 t/y of ferrochrome, which would increase to about 260 000 t/y by the fourth quarter of next year, on the back of an optimisation strategy. Output from the Boshhoek complex will be around 200 000 t/y by the end of this year, due to temporary furnace closures.

The furnace will start up on September 1 after being temporarily closed during the winter season owing to higher Eskom electricity prices.

Xstrata-Merafe chrome division MD Deon Dreyer said cost pressures were being felt throughout the mining sector, with rising power tariffs a significant challenge. "We're asking for a level playfield to stay competitive," he added, noting that Eskom,

as a State-owned entity, should not be about profit making. Dreyer said that Eskom had to ensure that electricity prices, which more or less doubled in real terms between 2008 and 2011, had to be sustainable.

On Tuesday, the Energy Intensive User Group, which represents Eskom's high intensity energy consumers, warned that power prices were approaching an affordability "tipping point". The group said that smelters would become increasingly unattractive unless interventions were made to moderate the price path.

"Long-term demand for ferrochrome will be strong as China continues to expand, and Xstrata-Merafe venture will retain its advantage as a low-cost producer and as the largest ferrochrome producer in the world," General works manager Francois Coetzee added. The company has allocated a capital investment of R8.3-billion between 2005 and 2013.

# Teacher faces assault charge

**Brits/Skeerpoort** – A primary school teacher has been arrested for allegedly assaulting a pupil in Skeerpoort, North West police said on Monday.

Tebogo Marothong (48) is accused of beating 8-year-old Benjamin Nakedi with a chalkboard duster for making a noise in the classroom, Lt-Col Lesego Metsi said. Marothong appeared in the Brits Magistrate's Court on Thursday August 25 and was released on a warning. The case was postponed to 9 October for further investigation.

The alleged assault took place on 15 July at an unnamed school in Skeerpoort. Metsi also added that Nakedi had to be admitted to hospital for treatment.



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