Cerro Colorado union accepts BHPB pay offer and strike averted

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Business News Americas reported that the union at BHP Billiton's Cerro Colorado copper mine in Chile on Friday voted to accept the company's pay offer to renew labor contracts for 41 months starting February 1st 2010.

Mr Gustavo Tapia union president told BNamericas that shortly after 3PM some 73% of the union had voted to accept the offer, which consisted of a 4.8% pay raise and CLP 7.6 million pesos (roughly USD 15,000) in bonuses per worker, Tapia said.

The number voting yes at the time was a majority large enough for the union to accept the proposal.

BHP Billiton and the union began talks in early November, before the scheduled date.

Workers at the company's 57.5% owned Escondida, the world's biggest copper mine, also accepted an early settlement, for a 5% pay raise and 14mn pesos in bonuses per worker.

However, employees at BHP Billiton's third mine in Chile, Spence, had not yet accepted the company's pay offer as of Friday and have been on strike for 39 days.

Cerro Colorado produced 18,600 tonnes of copper cathode during BHP Billiton's July-September quarter. Spence produced 51,000 tonnes of copper cathode in the period, while Escondida's output totaled 788,126 tonnes copper in the first nine months of this year. All are in northern Chile.

(Sourced from BNamericas)

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