

TRAILBLAZERS

Trailblazing the future

<http://www.mokwena.com>

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About Trailblazers

Trailblazers are freethinking individuals and focus groups with a shared vision of positively contributing towards advancing developmental discourse. The trailblazers' website stimulates and encourages discourse on Economic development, Political economy, knowledge economy and the green economy. The website serves as a forum for exchanging ideas, views and opinion. It attracts experts, academics, intellectuals and practitioners and anybody interested in contributing towards the debate. It is a site for generating new knowledge & cutting edge solutions for the global socio economic ills. The trailblazers seek to build social capital through the process of informal transmission of knowledge and social media. Also mentor and support practitioners in the specified field of work, through engagement, advice and referrals. The ultimate objective is to ensure professional development and support.

News of Top Stories

Machines can end platinum mine strife - former Lonmin CEO



LONDON – South Africa's loss-making platinum industry should have pushed through mechanisation of mines years ago to avert its current problems with restive unions and soaring wage demands, the former boss of miner Lonmin said. **Brad Mills**, chief executive of South Africa's third-largest platinum producer until 2008, said firms had to start the effort now or remain confronted by a large, highly unionised workforce. "My view was, this is a 15-year process but you've got to get your head out of this trap," Mills said, "And the only way you're going to do it is to convert, mechanise, as painful as that might be." Unlike coal and copper, transformed by automation and remotely controlled equipment, platinum mines remain labour intensive. The rock is drilled, blasted and cleared by men. As chief executive from 2004, US-born geologist Brad Mills, 59, led a push to take machines into Lonmin's narrow, sweltering shafts. But progress was slow, costs were steep and he was ousted in a boardroom coup. His efforts were reversed and some mine analysts say the opportunity has now passed. "Given what's happened it was exactly the wrong decision.

<http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/topic/lonmin>

CSIR's rural education pilot opens possibilities for scalability



Results from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIR's) information and communications technology (ICT) arm, the Meraka Institute's, rural education pilot programme indicated its potential sustainability and scalability. The institute aimed to develop and apply technology-

based interventions for improved education in rural areas. Many of South Africa's estimated 26 500 schools – 17 000 of which were in rural and remote areas – were without connectivity and access to the Internet, hampering access to education. The pilot kicked off with the distribution of multimedia tablets to teachers and students of the Arthur Mfebe Senior Secondary School, in Comfivaba, in the Eastern Cape, in August last year, where the study saw 77% students matriculate in 2012, compared with 41% in 2011, Meraka ICT for education and mobile learning manager **Merryl Ford** said on Thursday. The ICT for rural education development (ICT4Red) pilot project had been rolled out to support traditional teaching and learning with digital content on tablets and aimed to study the use of tablet computers and their impact on improving rural education. To date, Meraka, in conjunction with the Department of Basic Education and Department of Science and Technology (DST), besides others, had delivered tablets to 26 Nciba Circuit schools in the Comfivaba school district, benefiting 6 500 students, 350 teachers and 16 district officials. <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/csirs-rural-education-pilot-opens-possibilities-for-scalability-2013-08-01>



Easy-credit bomb set to explode



SOUTH Africans living for years beyond their means on debt now owe R1.45-trillion in the form of mortgages, vehicle finance, credit cards, store cards, personal and short-term loans. Unsecured loans, taken out by people who don't often qualify for credit and which must be repaid at heavy interest rates of up to

45%, grew sharply over the last five years. But the unsecured lending market came to a screeching halt in recent months as banks and lenders became far more strict. People who until now were borrowing from one lender to repay another older loan are now being turned away — a scenario that could lead to Marikana-style social unrest, and put pressure on companies to pay higher wages so people can afford to repay loans. Predatory lenders such as furniture retailers who have skirted an ethical line for years by tacking on hidden charges into "credit contracts", are now likely to face a backlash. The share prices of furniture retailers such as JD Group and Lewis seem relatively cheap compared with those of clothing and food retailers Mr Price and Woolworths, but their profitability is expected to be affected by stretched consumers who have borrowed money and find it hard to pay back loans. Lenders responded by giving out loans for longer periods. Consumers pay the same instalments, not realising they're paying more for longer. This enables lenders to cash in. <http://www.bdlive.co.za/economy/2013/08/04/easy-credit-bomb-set-to-explode>

Economic week ahead: Policy and growth clues revealed



Central bank decisions in Japan, Australia and Uganda and a series of closely monitored economic reports from China and Europe will keep economists and investors on their toes over the coming days. Closer to home, South Africa will update on mining and manufacturing and Nigeria will report

second-quarter growth figures. Here is your guide to the meetings, data releases and other events likely to move markets in the week ahead. Africa Nigeria – the continent's number two economy – will release second-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) figures and the Bank of Uganda will announce its latest rates decision on Monday. Nigeria's economy continues to demonstrate strong and diversified growth despite security problems. Already Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria is on track to become the continent's largest economy by 2020 as a result of strong GDP growth and a rebasing of its national accounts to 2010. The Bank of Uganda's monetary policy committee (MPC) kept the bank's policy rate unchanged at 11.0% at its July meeting and is expected to do so again this month. Officials cited renewed upward pressure on inflation, largely as a result of adverse weather conditions, as the reason for their decision. Ugandan consumer price inflation continued its upward trend last month, with the July figure reaching the highest year-on-year level seen so far in 2013. Price inflation increased from a revised 3.6% a year earlier in June to 5.1% in July. <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-08-05-economic-week-ahead-policy-and-growth-clues-revealed>