

South African miners reject pay offer

Miners in South Africa have rejected a 9 percent wage increase from the country's platinum producers

Earlier, thousands of workers near Lonmin's Marikana mine — the scene of the police killing of 34 strikers in 2012 — jeered when they were told about the tabled offer. The country's AMCU Union is seeking a doubling in miners' wages to around 800 Euros a month. The move to reject the pay offer prolongs a week of industrial action which is already estimated to have hit around 40 percent of the global supply of platinum. That in turn has helped push South Africa's rand currency to a five year low.

South African miner Venter Muluksi has one food item in his small fridge: a bag of potatoes that he hopes will last a week. Beyond that, the Impala Platinum miner who has been on strike for a week with around 100,000 of his comrades from the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), has a bag of maize meal and a loaf of bread.

But with the fatalism and resolve displayed by many a miner, he says

he is prepared to extend the strike until his union wins its goal of a 'living wage' of 12,500 rand (\$1,100) a month. The bulk of rival Anglo American Platinum and Lonmin's operations in South Africa have also been hit by the AMCU stoppage, which has affected over 40 percent of global output and dealt a fresh blow to investor confidence in Africa's largest economy.

"What difference does it make? Even when I'm working I'm only earning enough for food and rent," Muluksi, 40, a mechanical assistant at Implats, said at his one-room, cinder-block home that gets as hot as the underground shafts in summer. Holding a pay slip from late 2013, he points to a line that shows net pay of 4,268.66 for the month. A faded slip from 2008 shows he took home just 2,000 rand that month. He may not see another one for some time after AMCU mass rallies rejected pay hike offers from the three companies of between 7.5 and 9 percent.



Mine workers gather at Wonderkop stadium in Rustenburg

The 12,500 rand demand is more than double the basic entry-level wage. The three companies say they cannot afford the increases as they recover from a wave of 2012

wildcat strikes rooted in a turf war between AMCU and its arch-rival, the National Union of Mineworkers, in which dozens of people were killed.



Curator Adam Rosen writes 'Happy 30th Birthday'

Apple Mac marks its 30th birthday

It was 30 years ago that Steve Jobs launched the Apple Mac, taking it out of its canvas bag at the Flint Centre auditorium in Silicon Valley's Cupertino, to a palpable buzz of excitement

Big and beige and square, it was light years away from today's ultra slim silvery Macbook Air but the Mac changed — and arguably even created — the world of home computing forever.

The original Apple Mac had a memory capacity of 128k which meant constant ejecting and re-inserting of floppy disks. Initially many people thought it was a 'waste of time and a gimmick' said Dag Spicer of the Computer History Museum in Silicon Valley. But despite the doubters the Macintosh managed to create

an aura of cool around itself, starting with the now-famous advert directed by Ridley Scott that brought Apple to the attention of the world.

Features such as its graphical user interface meant people could navigate easily and options were organised into menus. Thanks to another revolutionary feature — the mouse — you could click icons to run programmes and drag and drop files to move them and even delete files by dumping them in the bin (or trash can). It brought fonts and other design tools which were previously the preserve of the professionals to everyday folk. And early Macs showed a happy face when they started up — what wasn't to love? But in fact despite all the appreciation, the original Macintosh didn't sell as well as Apple had hoped.

Research points to blue-eyed ancestors

Spanish researchers have unearthed surprising new evidence about what ancient Europeans looked like

Genetic tests carried out on the remains of a caveman who lived around 7,000 years ago have revealed a mix of European and African traits, with dark skin and hair and blue eyes. The human remains were found along with another skeleton belonging to two men in their early 30's. They had been extremely well preserved in a deep cave in the Cantabrian Mountains in north-western Spain.

"It's a combination of features that no longer exists in Europe today. From a genome point of view, this man was European, but he had darker skin than current Europeans, combined with blue eyes," says Pro-



fessor Carles Lalueza-Fox, researcher at the CSIC (Spanish National Research Council) in Barcelona. One explanation could be that the lighter skin colour evolved much later than was previously assumed.

Another result of the DNA study reveals this hunter-gatherer was probably lactose intolerant and had more difficulty digesting starchy foods than the farmer who transformed diets and lifestyles.

Fast stem cell creation by Japanese scientists

Japanese scientists say they have developed a new way of making stem cells which could bring in an age of 'personalised medicine'

The research team at the Riken Centre for Developmental Biology in Japan showed that stem cells could be created by putting ordinary blood cells in acid which 'shocks' them into becoming stem cells. Stem

cells are able to transform into any tissue and are already being trialled for healing the eye, heart and brain.

Until now stem cells were either controversially harvested from human embryos or genetically reprogrammed adult cells which often took weeks and had a low success rate.

'Progressive' Pope Francis featured in Rolling Stone magazine

A pope has appeared on the front cover of Rolling Stone magazine for the first time

Quoting Bob Dylan's *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, the music magazine says Pope Francis has gone from conservative to progressive, and calls the last papacy under Pope Benedict 'disastrous'. The Vatican has criticised the article as 'superficial journalism'.

Edward Snowden's Nobel nomination called into question

Edward Snowden's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize by two Norwegian MPs has been called meaningless

Some commentators point out that many people can nominate winners ahead of the weekend deadline. Baard Vegard Solhjell and Snorre Valen, from the Socialist Left (SV) Party, said the NSA whistleblower had damaged several countries' security interests in the short-term but that the debate and subsequent policy changes had helped peace and stability.

Turkey stuns investors with massive interest rate hike

In a bid to rescue the tumbling Turkish Lira, the country's central bank has made a massive hike in all its key interest rates

The surprise move came after an emergency midnight policy meeting. Immediately after the bank raise the overnight lending rate to 12 percent the Lira strengthened against the Dollar, but by late afternoon most the effect had evaporated. The decision comes despite opposition from Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan who says he wants to maintain economic growth ahead of elections in two months.

The Lira has been under pressure due in part to continuing political instability connected to a corruption scandal as well as and the global impact of a cut in US monetary stimulus. Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek played down the impact on growth of a sharp hike in interest rates, saying the economy would have suffered greater damage from a loss of faith in the central bank.

"If we don't preserve credibility, growth would lose ground on a much bigger scale, it would weaken much more rapidly," Mr. Simsek noted.