



DrumBeat: July 29, 2007

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Toiling in the Dark: Africa's Power Crisis](#)



Power blackouts — “load shedding,” in utility jargon — are hardly novel in sub-Saharan Africa, where many electricity grids remain chewing-gum-and-baling-wire affairs. Even so, this year is different. Perhaps 25 of the 44 sub-Saharan nations face crippling electricity shortages, a power crisis that some experts call unprecedented.

The causes are manifold: strong economic growth in some places, economic collapse in others, war, poor planning, population booms, high oil prices and drought have combined to leave both industry and residents short of power when many need it most.

[Worry about bread, not oil](#)

The great demographer and economist Thomas Malthus was 23-years-old the last time a British summer was this rain-soaked, which was back in 1789. The consequences of excessive rainfall in the late 18th century were predictable.

Crops would fail, the harvest would be dismal, food prices would rise and some people would starve. It was no coincidence that the French Revolution broke out the same year.

[Official: \\$20 billion arms sale to Saudis in the works](#)

The United States is developing a proposed \$20 billion, 10-year arms sales package for Saudi Arabia, a senior administration official confirmed on Saturday.

..."This is all about Iran," said the official, who spoke to CNN on condition of anonymity because discussions with the Saudis are still going on and the arms sale deal has not been completed.

[The choice is ours: Big Oil or Chavez?](#)

In the coming century, the world will transition from cars that run on liquid fuels to cars that run on something else, perhaps electricity or hydrogen. Until then, we have a choice. Either support the "Big Oil" companies that are SEC and IRS regulated, traded on the major stock exchanges, contribute to our economy and national security, and whose employees are our neighbors, or butt into energy myths and stand by idly (gleefully?) while Hugo Chavez ejects "Big Oil" from Venezuela.

[Venezuelan oil exports to US rebound](#)

Confirming their trend in April, Venezuelan crude oil exports to the United States in May climbed 50,000 bpd to an average of 1.23 million bpd, which is 63,000 bpd above May 2006.

In this way, Venezuela remained as the fourth largest oil supplier to the US, after Canada, Saudi Arabia, and Mexico, which overall provided over 1.4 million bpd each.

[Auction sells only oil-generated electricity](#)

While the world debates ways to fight global warming, Brazil, with huge hydroelectric potential and a candidate to lead world biofuels production (ethanol, biodiesel and biomass), strongly resumes investments in thermoelectric generation based on fuel oil, much more polluting than the so-called renewable energy sources. At least this was the scenario indicated by the fourth new energy auction (for supplies beginning in 2010), held yesterday via the internet and negotiating only the energy of thermoelectrics powered by the petroleum-based fuel.

[Gulf royalties targeted again](#)

The House on Friday resurrected a plan to go after scores of oil and gas companies that

have been pumping crude in the Gulf of Mexico royalty-free.

[Africa looks to biofuels for economic fortunes](#)

Faced with mounting energy crises, many African nations in recent years have zealously launched projects to produce cheaper biofuels, but few have gained steam.

[Japan to launch first hybrid trains](#)

Winding through rice paddies and lazily blowing its whistle along bubbly creeks, a two-car train in rural northern Japan is the latest entrant in the battle against global warming.

Want to save the planet? Then grass over your roof Following its runaway success with hybrid cars, Japan is bringing the world hybrid trains. Regular passenger runs are set to begin Tuesday on a short mountain route, the first time a diesel-electric hybrid train will be put into commercial service.

[Want to save the planet? Then grass over your roof](#)

They may look like homes out of Beatrix Potter books, but houses with grass lawns planted on the roof may be the latest weapon in the battle against global warming.

Green roofs, sewn with turf, trees and even herbaceous borders, are to be promoted by ministers who believe they will not only help to absorb CO2 emissions but also improve house insulation and cut heating bills.

[Pill power plants popping up](#)

Don't be so quick to throw out that expired blood pressure medication. Drug disposal companies are taking outdated or recalled prescription drugs from pharmacies and manufacturers and incinerating them, generating energy.

[Consumer Federation's Mark Cooper discusses struggles between Big Oil, ethanol industry](#) (video and transcript)

As the price at the pump continues to rise, how will the introduction of more ethanol into the fuels market affect consumers' wallets? During today's OnPoint, Mark Cooper, director of research at the Consumer Federation of America, discusses his new report, "Big Oil v. Ethanol: The Consumer Stake in Expanding the Production of Liquid Fuels." Cooper explains why he believes the oil industry is waging a war against the ethanol

industry. He talks about the effect refining capacity has had on oil prices and blames the oil industry for not expanding or strengthening its refining capacity. He also addresses the challenge of creating the appropriate infrastructure for getting E85 to consumers.

[Russia leads race for North Pole oil](#)

The Arctic's untapped resources include huge reserves of fuel and minerals. Now Moscow has raised tensions by dispatching an expedition to annex a vast expanse of the ocean.

[Buying shotgun shells will put a bigger hole in your wallet](#) - *Prices continue yearlong increase with no relief in sight*

Overall, prices on shotgun and rifle shells, along with components for loading, have increased more than 50 percent since Sept. 1.

...Remington, Federal and Winchester, the major shotshell manufacturers in this country, are all raising prices, citing the rapidly escalating cost of metals, mostly lead, essential to shell production. However, copper, steel and bismuth shotshells also increased during the same period. Fuel price increases have forced up the cost of shipping and delivering the shells, and war-time contracts have created competition for materials and manufacturing time.

[Sri Lanka hikes petrol pump price by 17 percent](#)

Sri Lankan oil companies said Sunday they have raised petrol pump prices by 17 percent, the sixth increase this year amid high crude oil costs.

[Barbados: Legislation to go before Parliament in August](#)

She explained that, "It is becoming harder to obtain hydrocarbon reserves, but international demand for them is at its highest & High oil prices create the opportunity for a viable economic return for investors in offshore exploration and global demand and shrinking hydrocarbon resources are driving more intensive exploration efforts in frontier territories. "Globalisation and technology facilitate a level of international business across boundaries, literally bringing the business world to Barbados' shores. The international trade and economic climate compel us, even as a vulnerable Small Island Developing State, to compete with the rest of the world," she explained.

[Crude oil prices rise fuelled by growth of US economy in Q2](#)

The movement in crude prices was fuelled by the growth of US economy in the second

quarter that indicated that the demand for fuel would rise. US economy expanded 3.4% last quarter, the fastest pace in more than a year. US consumes 24% of global oil production.

Crude oil also got a support with reports of refinery problems and floods in UK. A fire in a steam plant in a refinery in UK led to closure of entire refinery which will result in production losses and this provided a bullish sentiments.

[Turning a profit on gas, without the gas](#)

The talks led to one of the biggest and most important deals for tycoon Yosef Maiman, the Israeli partner in EMG. Maiman, an old hat at giant international deals, sensed a decade ago the raw potential of gas deals, and of connecting Israel to the gas fields off the Egyptian coast. Natural gas is cleaner than oil, cheaper and more accessible in the Eastern Mediterranean basin. It's an ideal solution for local power plants.

[High gas prices just a bump in roadway for Winnebago](#)

Among Winnebago's bright spots: New diesel-powered, Class C motor homes, the Winnebago View and the Itasca Navion, that get 17 to 19 miles per gallon, compared with eight to nine for many comparable vehicles, Hertzke said.

Introduced two years ago, the View and Navion appeal to fuel-conscious buyers and have the cachet of being powered by a Mercedes-Benz diesel engine.

[High gas prices aren't driving motorists to buy smaller cars](#)

According to a recent poll, nine of 10 Pennsylvanians support increasing fuel-efficiency standards, but roughly one of every two new vehicles bought today is a light truck. Light trucks include sport utility vehicles, pickups and vans and generally guzzle more gas than cars.

[Burlington fuel terminal sold](#)

"It will be our intention to make that facility more widely available to local Vermont companies," said Ed Faneuil, executive vice president and general counsel with Global. "Global will be a new competitor in the market in a way that ExxonMobil was not."

The terminal also stores diesel, heating oil and kerosene. Global plans to wholesale biofuels, as well.

"Global is a leader in trying to use renewable fuels and we're mixing both ethanol and biofuels into heating oil and in diesel fuel," said Tom Hollister, chief financial officer and

chief operating officer.

[Fueling the future](#)

No. 6 fuel oil's days are numbered at Lockheed Martin in Owego.

The defense contractor plans to replace its current heating system, fueled by the black, syrupy liquid, with a new wood-burning boiler system it will construct on-site to heat all 1.8 million square feet of its main plant in Owego.

[EU might free up land for biofuel crops](#)

Biofuels, destined to partially offset a coming oil shortage and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, will require much more farm land, forcing the European Union to cultivate fields that have lain fallow.

[Things are knot what they used to be](#)

"I get the media and politically correct scientists to scare the public against burning anything. Especially coal. Never mind all the smoke that's been cleaned from stacks. They still emit carbon dioxide, which I spook people into fearing as a 'greenhouse gas' responsible for global warming, though that's far from proven. Meanwhile, every promoter of a few kilowatts, from windmills to solar panels to cornstalks, I sic their lobbyists on Congress, and lo and behold, I've tied a sane energy policy up in knots."

[Potential Higher Prices for Oil Can Translate into More Sustainable Transportation... As Long as We Guide the Process](#)

The price of oil has been increasing rapidly since 2002, going from ~\$25/barrel to its current flirtations with a record \$80/barrel. Prices are skyrocketing largely because global demand is rising quickly, led by China's unprecedented growth that shows no signs of slowing as it hit 11.9% in the 2nd quarter of 2007. The discussion regarding oil is often centered on when we will run out or when production will decline. But I would like to reframe the issue into three important questions that we need to answer even if there is no decline for decades:

1. Can global oil production physically keep up with demand?
2. Can it politically keep up with demand?
3. If not, then what?

[Will cheap sales doom family fuel peddlers?](#)

For five weeks, Lehigh Valley motorists enjoyed some of the cheapest gas prices in the nation as warring sellers Wawa, Sheetz and Hess slugged it out in their battle to undercut each other's price.

Traffic jams snaked from the pumps as penny-pinching motorists drove miles out of their way to lap up gas that was selling at \$1 per gallon below the national average.

What could be wrong with saving \$20 on a single fill-up?

Well, just about everything, say independent gas station owners who contend that price wars among the heavyweight chains will drive many of them out of business, just as similar gas wars did in places such as Reading and the Lancaster area several years ago. The private operators fear they will become extinct, the chain operators will gobble up their business and the result will be a landscape of fewer stations and ultimately higher prices.

[Earth energy: Drawing warmth from the ground](#)

When it comes to heat, Richard L. Sansoucy of Paxton is a geothermal convert.

A building contractor and homeowner, Mr. Sansoucy heats and cools his 2,600-square-foot house entirely with warm air captured underground and circulated through the rooms of his home. It cost him \$988 last year.

[To dismay of power utilities, coal emissions are under fire](#)

Increasing worries about global warming caused by emissions from power plants, automobiles and other sources could pose a roadblock for the roughly 150 coal-fired power plants that have been proposed to satisfy rising electricity demand. This month, Citigroup downgraded coal company stocks, citing the politics of global warming among other factors.

[Callaway Electric customers to see 16.7% rate increase](#)

“It's due to the fact that our cost of wholesale power is going up,” Howard said. “(It's because of) environmental compliance, the cost of fuel due to the volatility of natural gas and coal, improvements to transmission lines to serve the increasing needs of the public and also to meet the new generation demand - both in peaking units and base load units.”

[Vermonters to add voices to energy debate](#)

Anticipating the need to replace the supply of about two-thirds of the state's electricity, 200 Vermonters will sequester themselves in a hotel for a weekend in early November to study energy options and consider how to balance Vermont's energy portfolio for the next generation.

[Panel recommends climate change market](#)

As California begins mapping out its strategy to cut greenhouse gas emissions, how industries will be forced to comply is emerging as one of the most complex aspects of the debate.

A key component of the state's plan to implement last year's far-reaching global warming law was submitted Friday to California air regulators. The state Air Resources Board received a 107-page report — commissioned last year by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger — that endorses a market-trading program.



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