



DrumBeat: August 25, 2007

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[BP's green drive dangles axe over \\$3.8bn US refinery development](#)

To rebuild its environmental image in America, BP has refused to take up the increased pollution limits it has been offered in order to upgrade a refinery near Chicago. But unless there are unexpected technological breakthroughs, the \$3.8bn plan will be scrapped, and a US refining capacity shortage will grow more acute.

[South Asia vegetable oil demand firm, imports seen curbed](#)

South Asia's demand for vegetable oils is expected to surge as much as 10 percent in the new oil year and outstrip production, but rising global prices may crimp imports as poor consumers switch to cheaper home-grown oils.

Japan - [Why Worry? Japan's Nuclear Plants at Grave Risk From Quake Damage](#)

In the 40 years that Japan had been building nuclear plants, seismic activity was, fortunately or unfortunately, relatively quiet. Not a single nuclear facility was struck by a big quake. The government, along with the power industry and the academic community, all developed the habit of underestimating the potential risks posed by major quakes.

Japan - [Eco-home is where heart is: Such houses cut energy consumption, but out of reach for many](#)

Attention is increasingly focused on environmentally friendly eco-houses, which are designed to reduce energy consumption. But such dwellings remain out of reach for the general public, as government measures to promote such houses are insufficient. Let us examine the cost and energy-saving effect of eco-houses by looking into a few examples built by ordinary people.

[Energy Sources Of The Future](#)

First the bad news: With oil prices rising and energy demand from emerging economies ballooning, no single energy source will emerge to replace fossil fuels.

The good news is that that's OK. Even if nothing ever rules the world like oil did last century, different regions will adapt by tapping the technologies and energy sources that suit them best.

[Hurricane Dean's Wake: Death And Cold Water](#)

The, er, cool thing about hurricane wakes is that some scientists think that they're critical to the redistribution of ocean heat in the direction of the planet's poles. We can see the cold wake at the surface; but there's also a warm anomaly below the surface. In order to restore equilibrium, then, the oceans presumably have to redistribute that additional sub-surface heat pole-ward in the direction of regions where waters are cooler.

What's more, that added heat, transported through the oceans, may be enough to have a significant effect on the climate. That's especially so if hurricanes intensify and so drive more warm water down into the ocean depths — more heat could then get transported to the poles, leading to a disproportionate warming of the higher latitudes in relation to the equatorial ones.

[Myanmar Detains at Least 63 Activists](#)

Myanmar's military junta has detained at least 63 activists who protested massive fuel-price hikes, state media reported Saturday as the government pursued its clampdown on the increasingly daring demonstrations.

[Myanmar to put activists on trial](#)

Thirteen pro-democracy activists arrested earlier this week in military-ruled Myanmar are being interrogated and legal action will be taken against them, a state-owned newspaper has reported.

The New Light of Myanmar said on Saturday that the detainees, most of them leaders of a student uprising suppressed in 1988, were being accused of "harming the stability of the state, community peace and rule of law" under an act that carries a penalty of up to 20 years in jail.

[Current global challenges and alternative energy futures for South Africa](#)

The combined effect of depletion of global oil and natural gas reserves, climate change

and global monetary imbalances and financial instability is likely to have significant impacts on the global and South African economies throughout the 21st Century.

[Carmakers fight fuel-efficiency bill](#)

As Congress gears up for a fall debate on whether to increase automobile fuel economy, lobbyists for the auto industry are working with chambers of commerce to support less stringent standards.

[Region's recycling in China prompts probe](#)

"The Chinese won't take anything they can't make money at," Smith said. "So if they're taking mixed plastics, they're sorting it over there, and reusing the plastic as something."

If plastics sent to China can't be profitably recycled, "the other option is to burn it as a fuel," he said. "Nobody is going to take anything to China to throw it out."

[State DOT becoming scooter boosters](#)

Higher gasoline prices have driven so many Connecticut residents to fuel-efficient motorized scooters that the state Department of Transportation has decided to buy 35 of them for rider-training purposes.

[The 50% MPG Gain That Detroit Won't Touch](#)

Gerald Rowley keeps his dreams in his garage. There, on a quiet street in this southeast Florida town, he stores an aging Mazda 626 sedan, cream white with a worn interior, unremarkable in nearly all respects with the exception of a precisely machined, one-gallon steel box in the trunk connected to fuel lines leading to a gasoline vaporizing device under the hood.

The steel box holds one gallon of regular unleaded gasoline. The device beneath the hood is called the VFS, Vaporizing Fuel System--not the most elegant name, but one considerably more acceptable and descriptive than the "Vapster" badge Rowley originally stuck on his invention.

[Smart car creator now turns his attention to fuel cell engines](#)

The man behind the micro-sized Smart car, the head of Swiss watch group Swatch, wants to develop a new "green" vehicle powered by fuel cell technology, a company

spokesperson said yesterday.

[How Corn Ethanol Could Pollute the Bay](#)

Despite rising food prices, it seems that nearly everyone is turning to corn-based ethanol as their choice for alternative fuel. Hidden behind these headlines, though, is an equally important but less visible cost: water pollution.

Corn is a "leaky" crop, losing more nitrogen per acre than most other crops. In the Washington region, much of this excess nitrogen ends up polluting the Chesapeake Bay and robbing fish, crabs and oysters of oxygen.

[EATING PROFITS: Restaurants weigh whether to jack up menu prices amid rapid rise in food bills](#)

First dairy prices shot up. Then meat and seafood followed suit. Now higher grain costs are causing the cost of bread to rise.

It all adds up to steeper prices on the menu, and small independent restaurants are feeling the pinch. They're weighing whether to eat the costs or try to pass them along to diners.

[Lebanon: EDL announces further power cuts due to breakdown](#)

The announcement added fuel to the fire. The Lebanese public, already enraged by the continuous electricity outages in their neighborhoods, were angered upon hearing EDL's announcement.

[Shell accuses Argentina of discrimination in fuel battle](#)

Anglo-Dutch oil company Royal Dutch/Shell, whose top executives are under threat of arrest, accused the Argentine government of "discrimination" in a page-wide advert published Friday in leading newspapers.

"The discrimination Shell is being subjected to is inadmissible," said company president Juan Aranguren in the statement, adding that the firm was unfairly blamed and fined for a diesel fuel shortage in the country.

[Congo Waits Skeptically For The Lights to Come On](#)

From a mud hut under the world's longest high-tension power line, Tshisumpa Nvita can see the rusting remains of a power station that, for a few months 30 years ago, brought electricity to this corner of Congo.

Like many local villagers, the 76-year-old was hired as a temporary worker on the U.S.-funded Cold War-era project.

But when work was completed, the lights went out again.

"We hoped it would give us power too. It wasn't until they finished that they said none of this was for us. It was for the mining companies," Nvita said.

[Mexican Lawmakers in Talks to Reduce Pemex Taxes](#)

Mexico's ruling party has agreed to include tax cuts for state-oil monopoly Petroleos Mexicanos as part of President Felipe Calderon's tax overhaul package so long as the reductions are gradual, Senator Gustavo Madero said.

[NTPC plans to become coal producer](#)

State-owned National Thermal Power Corp. has plans to become the second-largest producer of coal in India after Coal India Ltd.

The company said it would achieve this target in the next five years. The coal consumption of the country's major power generator is estimated to increase to 185 million to 200 million tons annually by 2017. It has planned to meet up to 25 percent of its total requirement from its internal sources over the next 10 years, The Business Line newspaper reported Friday.

[Australia: The great desert dream](#)

A farmer-frontiersman. A trailblazer for what has been described as "Australia's greatest 21st century adventure": to transform the Tropical North; to bring the southern farmers to the water, rather than the northern water to the farmers; to turn the Top End into a major exporter of food and, yes, water to Asia.

[China's oil officials intervene to ensure stable supplies throughout the country](#)

The number of private oil companies from southern China that are seeking fuel from sources in the north of the country due to local supply shortfalls has fallen and prices have eased slightly after the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) ordered the country's major refiners last month to ensure stable fuel supplies. Lower international crude oil prices have also led to a drop in fuel hoarding, state media

reported today.

[Gazprom seeks BP's help to break into American energy supply](#)

Russia's Gazprom is trying to muscle its way into the American energy market by encouraging BP to share a stake in its liquefied natural gas operation in Trinidad, which supplies the US.

Gazprom, the world's largest gas producer, has already secured a 25% share of the wholesale gas market in Europe - something that has caused widespread political unease - and wants to increase its influence in the US.

[Fueling International Growth](#)

In March, oil-field services giant Halliburton HAL announced it was moving its headquarters to Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The new digs puts the behemoth right in the middle of its fastest-growing business, providing oil-field technology services and products to develop oil and natural gas reserves in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Last year, the Eastern Hemisphere accounted for almost 40% of Halliburton's \$13 billion in oil-field services revenue.

[Energy shortages punish Argentine July industrial production](#)

Argentina's July industrial production grew 2.7% over the same month a year ago and actually declined 2.1% compared to June 2007 because of the energy crisis which forced many factories to reduce production, according to the latest release from the country's Statistics and Census Office, Indec.

[EU gearing up for battle over splitting up energy groups](#)

The European Commission, eager to fire up Europe's energy markets with more competition, is drafting plans to break up big integrated gas and power majors despite stiff opposition from many countries.

[South Africa: Copper Thieves, an Abattoir And Coal Mining Threaten Lake District](#)

However, the most serious threat to the future of Lake Chrissie and the surrounding wetlands may not come from sewage spills or illegal dumping, but from mining.

Hundreds of mining companies have applied for licences to begin digging opencast coal mines in the area. As international coal prices surge, even small scale mining can become a lucrative business.

[Court keeps claims for energy refunds alive](#)

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission must reconsider its denial of refunds to wholesale customers of Powerex Corp. and other electric companies in the Pacific Northwest during the 2000-01 California energy crisis, a federal appeals court ruled Friday.

[Biography: Gerhard Knies](#)

TREC says that we could meet the entire world's energy needs by covering a fraction of the world's deserts -- just 0.5 percent -- with concentrated solar power plants. It is now working with governments and businesses to make this dream a reality.

[War Without End - Part V: Inexorable Forces](#)

One of the most insightful thinkers in this area, who early on saw that the end of light sweet crude not only had economic consequences, but also political, and cultural ones, was Stirling Newberry. Prior to the domestic peak oil production, and subsequent decline, U.S. interests in the Middle-East were still economically important, but mainly for U.S. based oil companies. When the U.S. became a net importer of crude, it became a matter of national importance. It was also at the root of the trade and current account deficits that would plague the U.S. from then on.

[Curfew Extended in Nigerian Oil City](#)

Authorities in Nigeria have extended a dusk-to-dawn curfew in Port Harcourt for a further week.

Tight controls triggered by gun battles between rival gangs have been in effect in the oil-producing city since last Friday. Nigerian troops have raided hideouts of suspected gang leaders, sparking more gunbattles.

[Alberta Oil, Gas Land Sales Revenues Slump in 2007](#)

Alberta's revenues from selling exploration rights have slumped more than 60% so far this year, knocked by low natural gas prices, rising oil sands development costs and weak equity markets, the Globe and Mail reported Friday.

[Africa: The Global War On Oil Now Makes Its Way to the Continent](#)

In Nigeria and Angola, oil has been a source of internecine warfare and mafia-type crime on a massive scale even by African standards. In less troubled oil producing countries like Gabon, Guinea and Cameroon, national affairs are conducted by boisterous kleptomaniacs who use the proceeds only for personal gain.

[OPEC Secretary General to Visit Angola](#)

At the invitation of Angolan Oil Minister Desiderio Costa, Abdalla Salem El-Hadri, who will arrive in the Angolan capital Luanda on Saturday, will lead a team of OPEC technicians to discuss with Angola's oil industrial authorities issues like the OPEC's Reference Package Price including the Angolan crude oil.

[Congress may mull 'carbon tax' on McMansions](#)

To add to mortgage meltdown miseries, the credit panic, plunging home sales and rising foreclosures, here's a new worry: a proposed cutoff of mortgage-interest tax deductions for all houses with more than 3,000 square feet.



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