



DrumBeat: March 1, 2009

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[Lacking fuel, Tajikistan slides into darkness](#)

TURDIBOBO, Tajikistan (AFP) - Twice a day, the students in this village school just outside the Tajik capital rush out of their classrooms bundled in layers of heavy winter clothing.

They aren't running outside to play in the snow -- they're jockeying for position to warm their hands around the school's only heater, which now comes on just twice a day.

'Studies are not cancelled, kids are coming early, however not all of them are prepared for the lessons,' said teacher Daler Yukavov. 'The kids complain that they couldn't do their home work because of the lack of electricity.'

The poorest of all the ex-Soviet Central Asian states with a population of 7.5 million, Tajikistan is in the midst of a massive energy crisis that has caused chronic shortages even in the capital Dushanbe.

[US commander says falling oil prices will force Iraq to make cuts in security spending](#)

BAGHDAD (AP) — Falling oil prices will force Iraq to cut back on military spending, leaving questions about whether it can handle tasks such as protecting oil platforms in the Gulf once the American pullout is complete, a top U.S. commander said.

Iraq's leaders now have to decide where the cuts will be deepest: arms, patrol boats or air power — all of which the country needs to create a fully functioning security force.

[Dubai offers gas to Northern Emirates](#)

Dubai is ready to export gas to the Northern Emirates in case of emergency, a top official from the Dubai Water and Electricity Authority told Emirates Business.

Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, Dewa Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer said the emirate always keeps 15 per cent of its capacity as reserves, which it could use to help its sister emirates in times of urgent need.

[Sunoco Union Workers to Extend Talks Beyond Strike Deadline](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Union workers at Sunoco Inc.'s Philadelphia and Marcus Hook refineries decided to keep negotiating with the company beyond a noon strike deadline because progress was made on a dispute over job security.

[Houston companies benefit from India's energy growth](#)

MUMBAI — Paradigm had 13 employees in Mumbai when Ankur Gupta left Houston to run the company's India operations five years ago.

Today, the Houston software company has 50 people in the country, selling its software and analyzing well data for Indian oil companies.

[Saudi inflation to drop to 6.7% as economy slows](#)

A sharp fall in global prices will ally with slower domestic economy to reverse fast-growing inflation in Saudi Arabia this year, a key Saudi financial firm said yesterday.

Inflation in the world's dominant oil power hit a record annual high of 9.9 per cent in 2008 but will likely fall back to round 6.7 per cent this year, the Riyadh-based Jadwa Investment said in its latest monthly economic report.

[Bill McKibben: The Carbon Addicts on Capitol Hill](#)

Washington has seen its share of big protests over the years, and most of them center on the White House, the Mall or the Capitol. That will change tomorrow, when the first big protest of the Obama era -- and the first mass civil disobedience against global warming in this country -- will take place against the not-very-scenic backdrop of the Capitol Hill Power Plant, a dirty symbol of the dirtiest business on Earth, the combustion of coal.

[How Jamaica Can Beat The Energy Crisis](#)

With close to zero growth over the last six months and our major trading partner having difficulties of its own, one way to obtain growth is to reduce our outlay for energy.

Jamaica cannot sit and wait for new technologies. We must act now with what is available or the yolk of fossil dependence will hang us all. PV (Electricity creation from sunlight) is the obvious solution and is enjoying ever increasing usage worldwide.

[From Tons of Manure, a Growth Industry](#)

It took eight years' development, a \$72,000 federal grant secured through Connecticut's Agricultural Businesses Cluster, and countless grim experiments. Now their manure-based CowPots — biodegradable seed-starting containers — are being made on the farm and sold to commercial and backyard growers who prefer their advantages over plastic pots.

[Seattle finds itself at the crossroads as the Great Disruption ends era as banking, insurance center](#)

"Some cities and regions will eventually spring back stronger than before. Others may never come back at all. As the crisis deepens, it will permanently and profoundly alter the country's economic landscape. I believe it marks the end of a chapter in American economic history, and indeed, the end of a whole way of life."

That way of life has depended on cheap oil and, in recent years, easy credit and a series of bubbles. Florida writes: "You don't have to strain too hard to see the financial crisis as the death knell for a debt-ridden, overconsuming and underproducing American empire — the fall long prophesied by (historian) Paul Kennedy and others."

[Crisis may force Opec members to cut barriers](#)

Even as the financial crisis may force some Opec members to lay down barriers for entry of international oil companies (IOCs), the Middle East-based national oil companies (NOCs) with stronger balance sheets will not do the same, an energy analysis firm said in a recent update.

Washington based energy analysis firm PFC Energy said countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador and Algeria that are under "financial stress" could ease oil sector entry terms this year. It attributed its conclusions to a study made by its Petroleum Risk Manager service. Countries with weak government finances, declining production or immediate technical needs could make concessions to attract investments. International oil companies (IOCs) may, therefore, find greater negotiating leverage in these countries.

[Will US, China face off in Africa over oil reserves?](#)

The fact that new President Barak Obama has great favor in African nations such as Kenya, his father's native country, seems to be making waves among Chinese leaders. That is according to Professor Albert Kwong, founder and vice chairman of PetroAsian Energy Limited, a Chinese oil concern headquartered in Hong Kong. Kwong was educated in the United States and spent the years 1977-81 in Midland working for Arco (now BP).

China, now the world's number two oil consumer, has spent decades currying favor with African nations. In the last decade or so China has been parlaying that influence into oil production opportunities on that continent. The United States has largely focused its petro-influence in the Middle East, leaving China largely alone in Africa.

Now, says Professor Kwong, Obama's presidency brings a new face and new favor among Africans, especially in Kenya, for America.

[Iran indicates no likely output cuts at OPEC meet](#)

TEHRAN - Iran's oil minister said he did not expect OPEC to cut output again at a meeting this month because an 80 percent commitment by the group to recent curbs had helped stem oil price falls, media reported on Sunday.

Iran, the second biggest producer in the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, had previously joined some other members in saying OPEC could decide to deepen existing cuts when the group next meets on March 15 in Vienna.

[Starvation and strife menace torn Kenya](#)

NAIROBI, Kenya: One year after this country exploded in ethnic bloodshed, trouble is brewing here again.

Ten million people face starvation, partly because farmers in crucial food producing areas who fled their homes last year have not returned, instead withdrawing deeper into their ethnic enclaves, deeper into fear.

At the same time, public confidence in the Kenyan government is plummeting. Top politicians have been implicated in an endless string of scandals involving tourism, fuel, guns and corn.

[Chavez sends troops to Venezuelan rice companies](#)

CARACAS, Venezuela: President Hugo Chavez on Saturday ordered troops to temporarily seize control of all Venezuelan rice processing plants to ensure they produce at full capacity amid soaring inflation and persisting reports of food shortages.

[Nigerian children branded as witches in deadly purge](#)

Some experts blame Christian extremism and polygamous rivalry for the child factor in witch hunting.

Locals say the main factor is greed on the part of the self-proclaimed pastors who have proliferated in the area in recent years.

..."Some people are making brisk business out of defenceless children. It's greed, targeting gullible and susceptible rural people," said Akwa Ibom State spokesman Aniekan Umanah.

Religion "is the only industry we have in Akwa Ibom outside oil," said a local taxi driver.

[Device maker has a flair for drumming up business and scorn](#)

Dennis Lee is a salesman.

The charismatic 62-year-old from Passaic County has traveled America for decades, hawking inventions at convention centers, hotel ballrooms and sun-drenched state fairs. Delivering his folksy pitch in a suit and tie, Lee invokes Scripture while he accuses Washington of suppressing innovation to protect big oil companies.

Authorities describe him as a cross between P.T. Barnum and Jimmy Swaggert, a convicted felon who has touted fertilizer that grows 17-foot-tall corn and engines that run on pickle juice and soda pop.

Now, after years of taking lumps from skeptics and consumer-affairs investigators, Lee is fending off accusations from the federal government. In January, the Federal Trade Commission filed suit in New Jersey, accusing Lee of making false claims about his latest device, which sells for \$1,000 and purports to "turn any vehicle into a hybrid."

[Harper warns Russians after two bombers intercepted](#)

Earlier yesterday, Defence Minister Peter MacKay disclosed that two CF-18 fighter jets met at least one Russian bomber within 24 hours of the U.S. President's trip to Ottawa on Feb. 19 just outside of Canada's Arctic airspace.

The incident set off a round of bitter sniping between Moscow and Ottawa that was a throwback to the Cold War era.

[U.S. must come clean on oil](#)

Do Americans want "clean" oil from dirty regimes, such as Venezuela and Saudi Arabia, or do they want "dirty" oil from a clean regime such as Canada? That is Washington's multi-trillion-dollar question.

If Americans want to continue to depend on oil from regimes that dislike, or conspire against them, then that's their choice. And depend they will, because unless gas-

guzzlers, inefficient vehicles and suburban sprawl are made illegal, it will take decades to reduce their oil usage.

[End to oil dependence urged](#)

Iraq's Prime Minister has urged an end to his country's dependence on oil and gas as its main source of revenue.

Nouri al-Maliki said the country must diversify its economy or risk being vulnerable to drops in oil prices, such as the recent fall, which has forced Iraq to trim its budget and could shrink plans for reconstruction.

[Iraq Navy trains to defend Gulf oil platforms](#)

"If it is a suicide vessel they are probably not going to answer," the Royal Navy officer overseeing this exercise told AFP, referring to the type of attack that killed two people on the neighbouring Al-Basra platform in 2004.

Such tactics have been feared since terrorists rammed the American ship USS Cole in the Yemeni harbour of Aden in 2000, killing 17 American sailors.

Iraq's navy is now patrolling these seas and training to confront any such attack. The economy is almost entirely dependent on oil, which delivers 98 per cent of the Iraqi government's revenues.

[Nigeria: Presidency - No Going Back On Deregulation](#)

Lagos — The Presidency last night said there was no going back on the deregulation of the oil sector as the policy was one of the plans with which the administration plans to disconnect the cabal in the sector that has been holding the nation by the jugulars in the distribution and sale of petroleum products.

[Kuwait in new crisis as lawmaker files to quiz PM](#)

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) - Kuwait on Sunday appeared headed for a new political showdown after an opposition lawmaker filed to quiz the prime minister of the oil-rich Gulf state over allegations of misuse of public funds.

[Jersey Shore rentals are stable despite down economy](#)

Surging gasoline prices forced many New Jerseyans to rethink their vacation plans last summer, and eventually stay closer to home.

This year, a tank of gas is far cheaper. But the slumping economy and soaring unemployment rate seems to be having the same affect as expensive fuel, with New Jerseyans continuing to opt for a family-- and wallet-friendly vacation at the Jersey Shore.

[Lower heating oil prices are both a blessing and curse](#)

Garside predicted Thursday that most oil dealers in the state will not offer prebuy contracts this year.

"As far as the industry is concerned, both wholesalers and retailers would like to see this program go away. You can't win," Garside said. "But you can't predict the market because it is too volatile."

He said prebuy contracts worked well for consumers the last three previous heating seasons because home heating oil prices increased beyond the price they locked in. But consumers didn't win that battle this year.

Garside some oil dealers are also worried they'll lose some of their most loyal customers this spring because they were unable to let them out of their contracts.

[Forget gold, farmland makes sense](#)

Many investors see gold as a good investment in times of economic uncertainty but in fact British farmland has performed even better in the past 25 years. If you look back to 1983 and take the price of gold and British farmland at that time as a base, gold has risen in value by 81 per cent but farmland is up 115 per cent – indeed, even oil prices have risen only a little more than farms.

[Firms build on gains in thin-film methods](#)

BRIAN TELL and his business partners believe they have a good idea for making electricity from sunlight on canopies that protect parking lots in the Southwest from the blazing sun.

[Hopes high to turn trash into energy](#)

LifeGrid wants to build a \$550 million plant capable of taking tons of trash and converting it into ethanol and biodiesel.

"Everybody sees the opportunity because trash is something that is a huge problem because our landfills are full," said David Ushio, vice chairman and director of Pacific Operations for LifeGrid.

[Hawaii can take lead in algae energy research](#)

Algae is the word of the day. Not the hard-to-remove algae in the ponds around the Capitol, but the aquatic microalgae that researchers are developing to fuel our power plants.

The technology is not yet perfected, but the possibilities are enormous. How good are algae's prospects, and how much attention should we give it?

[New outlook in U.S. raises hopes on climate treaty](#)

Until recently, the idea that the world's most powerful nations might come together to tackle global warming seemed an environmentalist's pipe dream.

[Capitol power plant dims clean energy hopes](#)

WASHINGTON – As Congress tries to clean up the nation's energy sources and cut gases blamed for global warming, it is struggling to do so in its own backyard.

The Capitol Power Plant, a 99-year-old facility that heats and cools the hallowed halls of Congress, still burns coal and accounts for one-third of the legislative branch's greenhouse gas emissions. For a decade, lawmakers have attempted to clean it up.

[House Is Abandoning Carbon Neutral Plan](#)

The U.S. House of Representatives has abandoned a plan to make its offices "carbon neutral," a sign that Congress is wrestling with a pledge to become more green even as it crafts sweeping legislation on climate change.

[Dyer: Obama's climate strategy](#)

The problem is history. The United States, like the other fully industrialised countries, has been emitting greenhouse gases for a long time, and is very rich as a result. China, like the other rapidly industrializing countries, has only been producing large emissions for a couple of decades, and is still relatively poor.

The two countries now emit about equal amounts of carbon dioxide each year, but China has four times as many people, so its per capita emissions are still only a quarter as big. Over time, the United States has put three times as much carbon dioxide as China into the atmosphere. So the United States, in Beijing's view, has a moral obligation to make much deeper cuts, much sooner, than China.

[Young People to Swarm Capitol With Green Agenda](#)

Thousands of young people, many of them emboldened by the 2008 presidential contest, will descend on the Capitol tomorrow to urge the government to take radical action to stem climate change and plant the seeds of a green economy.

[Greenies must warm to nukes](#)

The old saying to be careful what you wish for because you might get it, applies to environmentalists who have spent 20 years trying to get our politicians alarmed about global warming.

On the plus side, for them, they've succeeded. On the down side, they've revived the nuclear industry, which most loathe. Call it the irony of unintended consequences.

[Global warming could delay, weaken monsoons: study](#)

CHICAGO - Global warming could delay the start of the summer monsoon by five to 15 days within the next century and significantly reduce rainfall in much of South Asia, a recent study has found.

Rising global temperatures will likely lead to an eastward shift in monsoon circulation which could result in more rainfall over the Indian Ocean, Myanmar and Bangladesh but less over Pakistan, India and Nepal, the study found.



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