



Drumbeat: April 1, 2009

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Keynote: The Back-to-the-Lander](#)

Vandana Shiva, India's leading environmental activist, says that the industrialized West is literally consuming the developing world. We eat cinnamon that comes out of Thailand, bananas from Central America. To feed our ever-growing appetites, we push industrial agriculture methods on once-traditional agrarian societies, and now we want these faraway lands to produce a different kind of food: biofuel, to feed the West's automobiles. At some point, Shiva argues, we're going to have to choose between sacred cow and sacred car.

Shiva founded an organization called Navdanya to promote research in organic agriculture and saving heirloom seeds. In her 2008 book *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*, she argues that the rebirth of sustainable, traditional agriculture offers the best way forward, in both India and in the West.

"There is a myth that there are agricultural societies, and then there are industrial societies and service societies, as if when you become an industrial or service society you don't need food," she says. "As we hit climate chaos, as we hit peak oil, assuming that you can get your food from far away and use fossil-fuel-intensive systems to produce food is totally not sustainable. Bringing food security close to home will have to be the project of the future."

[Oil Sands Docu "Downstream" Launches "Our Earth"](#)

With Canada (not Saudi Arabia) as the U.S.'s primary source of oil, the film relates how one courageous doctor fights for the lives of the aboriginal people residing downstream from the oil sands of Alberta, one of the most polluting and burgeoning oil operations in the world (over a million barrels of oil per day to the U.S.). The doctor spots a surprising increase in the rate of a rare type of cancer among the townspeople of Ft. Chipewyan, while the citizens have seen an increased amount of wildlife deformities in the river and ecosystem over the last 10 years.

[Kuwait bourse halts trading in 36 companies](#)

KUWAIT CITY - The Kuwait Stock Exchange on Wednesday halted trading of shares in

36 companies over their failure to meet the deadline to provide financial results, a move affecting an unprecedented number of mostly investment firms that reflected how seriously the global meltdown has affected this oil-rich nation.

[South Africa: Petrol stations 'will run dry if strike goes ahead'](#)

Petrol stations will run dry if a strike by the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (Satawu) goes ahead, the Fuel Retailers' Association said on Wednesday.

"The infrastructure is under pressure in any event -- so a strike will cause chaos," said the association's CEO Peter Morgan.

[North Sea Team Searching for Helicopter Finds 8 Bodies, Sky Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Rescue workers searching for a helicopter that ditched today in the North Sea off eastern Scotland found eight bodies, Sky News reported.

[VeraSun closes sale of 5 ethanol plants to Valero](#)

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) -- VeraSun Energy Corp. says it has closed on the sale of five ethanol plants and one development site to traditional refiner Valero Energy Corp.

VeraSun, which filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in October, auctioned off its assets and Valero submitted a successful bid of \$477 million for plants in Aurora, South Dakota; Charles City, Fort Dodge, and Hartley, Iowa; Welcome, Minnesota; a development site in Reynolds, Indiana, and two additional plants.

[Clash of Subways and Car Culture in Chinese Cities](#)

GUANGZHOU, China — Chan Shao Zhang is in the race of his life.

After four decades of false starts, Mr. Chan, a 67-year-old engineer, is supervising an army of workers operating 60 gargantuan tunneling machines beneath this metropolis in southeastern China. They are building one of the world's largest and most advanced subway systems.

The question is whether the burrowing machines can outrace China's growing love affair with the automobile — car sales have soared ninefold since 2000. Or are a hundred Los Angeleses destined to bloom?

[Enthusiasm Builds for Helping a Shift to Fuel-Efficient Cars](#)

WASHINGTON — Finally, a bailout for truly needy Americans: the owners of gas-guzzling, rust-bucket, heap-of-junk, rattletrap pieces of — well, let's just say jalopies.

A concept embraced by President Obama on Monday as part his effort to save General Motors and Chrysler from collapse would provide cash to buyers of new fuel-efficient cars — if they traded in a clunker.

[Plan to rescue MTA goes off rails: Bailout 'falling apart' over payroll tax dispute](#)

A plan to rescue millions of straphangers from sky-high fare hikes and widespread service cuts suddenly veered off track in Albany Tuesday night, sources said.

Sources familiar with the talks between Gov. Paterson's office, the Assembly and the state Senate said it became unclear that Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith could get a package passed - even without tolls on the city's free bridges.

"It's falling apart at the seams," one source said, adding that some Senate Democrats also appeared to be balking at the employer-paid payroll tax part of the plan.

[Auto bankruptcy: What it means](#)

A bankruptcy at GM or Chrysler will have widespread impact, from consumers to auto workers to taxpayers.

[Boats Too Costly to Keep Are Littering Coastlines](#)

MOUNT PLEASANT, S.C. — Boat owners are abandoning ship.

They often sandpaper over the names and file off the registry numbers, doing their best to render the boats, and themselves, untraceable. Then they casually ditch the vessels in the middle of busy harbors, beach them at low tide on the banks of creeks or occasionally scuttle them outright.

The bad economy is creating a flotilla of forsaken boats. While there is no national census of abandoned boats, officials in coastal states are worried the problem will only grow worse as unemployment and financial stress continue to rise. Several states are even drafting laws against derelicts and say they are aggressively starting to pursue delinquent owners.

[Duke Energy plans wind project, lines up sales](#)

Electric company Duke Energy Corp. on Wednesday said it plans to develop a second

wind energy project in Cheyenne, Wyo., and has reached power purchase agreements with two regional utilities.

[U.S.-Backed Program Gave Millions to Iran, Syria](#)

(IsraelNN.com) Iran and Syria received millions of dollars from a U.S.-backed program that promotes the peaceful use of nuclear energy, according to a U.S. Government Accountability Office report released Tuesday, The Wall Street Journal reported. They were two of four terrorism-sponsoring countries to receive funding under the International Atomic Energy Agency's Technical Cooperation program,

[Drop in oil industry spending fuels fear of shortages, price spikes](#)

An investment slump in the global oil industry is delaying projects worldwide, and raising concerns about future production shortfalls and another bout of record high prices in coming years.

Even conservative estimates suggest global crude production could be 7 per cent below previously forecast levels in 2014 if current investment trends continue. As demand picks up, the supply shortfall would drive prices higher, says a recent report from the Cambridge Energy Research Associates, a Massachusetts-based consultancy.

But the price spike may be coming sooner than many people expect, said Matthew Simmons, a Houston-based investment banker who has become the most prominent prophet of looming oil shortages.

[Changing Landscape of Global E&P Industry](#)

Last week marked a significant point in the current petroleum industry downturn. The more than \$100 a barrel oil price decline, coupled with a 70%+ drop in U.S. natural gas prices during the second half of last year, signaled energy industry participants that their world would be significantly different in the future from the view they held as late as July 2008. There was little recognition of this change in the early stage of the price decline, but after the credit crisis exploded in mid September, about the same time that Hurricane Ike landed on the upper Gulf Coast of Texas, the realization about the future became real.

[Cheaper gas can't last, analysts warn](#)

Retail gasoline prices fell across much of the U.S. over the last week, the Energy Department said Monday, but analysts warned motorists to enjoy it while it lasted. Prices were expected to rise to as high as \$2.25 a gallon nationally and to \$2.50 in California and the West Coast by the Memorial Day weekend.

[Mexico catches gang that allegedly stole oil, sold it to US refineries](#)

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Police in northern Mexico caught a gang that allegedly stole oil from state-owned pipelines and smuggled it across the border to sell it to U.S. refineries, authorities said Tuesday.

[Exxon Boosts Exploration in a Maturing US Gulf of Mexico](#)

After years of flirtation, it seems that the U.S. Gulf of Mexico has finally seduced Exxon Mobil Corp.

The Irving, Texas, oil giant said in a financial and operating review released Monday that in 2008 it obtained 142 leases to explore for oil and gas in the offshore Gulf -- up from five tracts a year before and seven in 2006. This level of interest is a sign that the area, once considered a wild frontier, has reached maturity in the eyes of the largest oil company in the U.S.

"There's more oil to be found than they thought before," said Jason Gammel, a New York-based analyst with Macquarie.

[Gazprom signs north Nigeria oil search deal](#)

ABUJA (Reuters) - Russian energy giant Gazprom has signed an agreement with a Nigerian firm to analyse three oil blocks in northern Nigeria for possible exploration, a senior company official said on Wednesday.

[Petrobras Invests Heavily in Offshore Drilling](#)

With massive deepwater finds in the pre-salt layer, as well as the Campos and Santos Basins, Brazilian state-owned Petrobras pledged an investment of \$174.4 billion for 2009 to 2013. With a firm commitment to exploration and production, the company hopes to become one of the five largest energy companies in the world.

In an interview with Rigzone, a Petrobras executive explained that the company was able to achieve its recent successes because it invested when times were tough. "This allowed the company to develop in deepwater oil production, in the '80s when only a few companies could do it because the prices were not lucrative," explained Decio Fabricio Oddone da Costa, CEO of Petrobras Energia.

[Kazakhs accuse Eni, Parker Drilling of tax evasion](#)

ASTANA (Reuters) - Kazakhstan accused Eni (ENI.MI), one of the companies developing the huge Kashagan oilfield in the Caspian Sea, and U.S. oil services firm Parker Drilling of tax evasion.

Kashagan, Kazakhstan's largest oil field, was at the centre of a dispute between the government and foreign oil majors over the timeframe and its costs of development. The row ended last year after Kazakhstan increased its stake in the project.

[Shell Resumes Soku Gas Supply to Nigeria LNG Plant](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Europe's largest oil company, said it restarted output at its Soku natural gas plant in Nigeria that supplies a liquefied natural gas terminal.

[Abu Dhabi, Conoco Preparing Sour Gas Project Tender](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., the state-owned crude producer, and partner ConocoPhillips are preparing a tender for bids for work on a sour-gas project to boost output of the fuel in the Persian Gulf state.

[Russian pipeline blasts in Moldova, gas supplies to Balkans suspended](#)

BUCHAREST (Xinhua) -- A gas pipeline explosion occurred Wednesday morning in southern Moldova, and Russia's gas supplies to the Balkans were suspended after the incident.

[Gazprom says Turkey to get more gas](#)

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's Gazprom will raise supplies to Turkey via the Blue Stream pipeline after it was forced to cut supplies to the Balkans by 40 percent because of a blast on a pipeline in Moldova, the firm said on Wednesday.

[Russia oil service firm fails to pay CLN put - sources](#)

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian oil service company Siberian Service Company (SSK) has failed to pay a put option exercised by holders of a \$100 million credit-linked note, a banking source and a holder of the bonds said on Wednesday.

"The company has paid the coupon but failed to execute the put option," the banking source said.

[Iraqi forces revamp hit by oil prices: Pentagon](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) – The global economic crisis and recent drop in oil prices could hamper Baghdad's efforts to better equip its security forces, the Pentagon said in a report released Tuesday.

[Saudi government cracks down on Shiite dissidents](#)

AWWAMIYA, Saudi Arabia – A cleric's threat of secession has brought a swift government crackdown in this poor, radical Shiite town in Saudi Arabia's increasingly restive religious minority heartland atop the Sunni kingdom's main oil reserves.

[Utility customers in arrears face loss of service](#)

With the state-mandated cold-weather moratorium on gas and electric shutoffs officially over, thousands of electric and natural gas customers face potential service disconnection today.

[BP faces civil charges over Alaska spill](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) – The United States has said it had filed a civil law suit against BP's Alaskan subsidiary BPXA, following pipeline leaks which caused crude oil to spill into Alaska's seas in 2006.

A statement from the Justice Department said it had filed a complaint with a District Court in Anchorage, accusing BPXA of failing to prevent the leakage of 200,000 gallons (757,000 litres) of oil into Prudhoe Bay.

[Stimulus-funded highway projects underway](#)

A USA TODAY review shows the early stimulus money appears to have gone to highway projects.

[Cities' paratransit services face cutbacks, fare increases](#)

Cities nationwide are raising fares and cutting service for paratransit for seniors and people with disabilities to make up for funding shortages.

"As good of a system it is for people with disabilities, it's a very expensive service for transit systems," says William Millar, president of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

At the same time that partransit systems are struggling with funding, ridership is up. There was a 5.8% increase in national paratransit ridership last year, according to APTA's "Public Transportation Ridership Report" released in March.

[Shell Says Biofuel May Make Up 10% of Fuel Mix in 'Few Decades'](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Europe's largest oil company, said biofuels may account for as much as 10 percent of global transport fuel in the coming decades.

"We believe biofuels could grow from just 1 percent of the world's transport-fuel mix today to as much as 7-10 percent over the next few decades," Chief Executive Officer Jeroen van der Veer said in a speech published on Shell's Web site today, which he will deliver tomorrow at the Paris International Oil Summit.

[Weak crude, cane shortage hit India ethanol expansion](#)

Mumbai - A sharp decline in sugar cane production coupled with lower crude oil prices that make ethanol a less viable option as fuel has hit India's plans to sharply increase its ethanol production capacity, analysts said Wednesday.

This could delay millions of dollars in new investments as sugar mills put off or scrap investments in new ethanol facilities.

[BP axes 620 jobs from solar business](#)

BP blamed the cutbacks on the credit crunch and lower-cost competition saying its global manufacturing capacity would still increase during this year and next via a series of strategic alliances with other companies.

[The Green Movement Is All About Energy](#)

I'm aware that this might be controversial, but if you had the choice between insulating a house with "R19" recycled denim insulation and one with "R35" fiberglass insulation, the more highly efficient fiberglass-insulated house is going to do more to help solve the Earth's current energy dilemma. I apologize to all the "greenies" out there, but this fact is indisputable.

[Reminder: Don't Mess with Mother Nature. She has a Long Memory and a Nasty Temper.](#)

Author James Howard Kunstler told the Forum that the end is near, as he's been saying

since 1994. In *The Long Emergency: Surviving the End of Oil, Climate change, and Other Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty-first Century*, he predicts that we will return to an agrarian society, and hunger and thirst will prevail. Well, yes. It could happen, but we are smarter than that and more practical.

[Bill McKibben issues global call to action](#)

On October 24, we will stand together as one planet and call for a fair global climate treaty. United by a common call to action, we'll make it clear: the world needs an international plan that meets the latest science and gets us back to safety.

This movement has just begun, and it needs your help.

[California: Senate Approves 33% Renewable Energy Bill](#)

SACRAMENTO – Senate Bill 14, which requires all energy providers to buy 33 percent of their energy from clean renewable energy sources by 2020 has been approved by the Senate 21-16. The bill, authored by State Senator Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto) now heads to the Assembly.

[Saudi 'slow to act on climate change'](#)

JEDDAH // In the 1980s, expatriates working at Saudi Aramco, a Saudi oil company, used to spend their weekends water skiing and swimming in a lake in the heart of the desert.

Two decades on, however, and there is nothing left of Lake Layla, once considered the largest body of water on the Arabian peninsula.

[Carbon Capture Needs 'Apollo-Style' Program in EU, Alstom Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The European Union must accelerate efforts to capture and store carbon dioxide released by power plants or risk missing its goals to reduce global-warming emissions, a report commissioned by Alstom SA said.

[UN climate talks: Save the forests -- but how?](#)

BONN (AFP) – Deforestation, one of the main drivers of global warming, has barged its way to the heart of UN climate talks, which resumed in Bonn this week.

But which makes the better incentive for saving the carbon-absorbing tropical

woodlands: market mechanisms or public funding?

[U.S. House Democrats detail climate change proposal](#)

WASHINGTON, March 31 (Reuters) - Leading Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday offered a climate change and energy efficiency bill that would give industry up to 2 billion tonnes in "offsets" to help them meet requirements for cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The legislation by top Democrats in the House Energy and Commerce Committee also would give industry "rebates" so that U.S. firms can remain competitive with overseas competitors.

[Earth population 'exceeds limits'](#)

There are already too many people living on Planet Earth, according to one of most influential science advisors in the US government.

Nina Fedoroff told the BBC One Planet programme that humans had exceeded the Earth's "limits of sustainability".

..."We need to continue to decrease the growth rate of the global population; the planet can't support many more people," Dr Fedoroff said, stressing the need for humans to become much better at managing "wild lands", and in particular water supplies.



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