



Drumbeat: April 26, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on April 26, 2009 - 9:40am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Groups See Added Risks From Change in Climate](#)

The effects of climate change, especially rising seas, threaten trillions of dollars' worth of coastal property, and flood-hazard maps, zoning laws, building codes and insurance rates in the United States do not accurately reflect the risk, an unusual coalition of groups reported Thursday.

The coalition — organized by the Heinz Center, a research organization that focuses on environmental issues, and Ceres, an organization of environmentally conscious investor, insurance and other groups — said the nation had failed to take “reasonable steps” to reduce economic losses and protect residents of the coast.

In a report, it urged that government flood-hazard maps be updated and that local land-use policies bar people from building or rebuilding in areas at high risk of flooding.

[Does understanding complexity beget a tragic view of life?](#)

Sheer exuberance is often enough to carry the young into the most daunting and dangerous of endeavors. But as we age, experience can make us more hesitant. Many people discover that the universe can sometimes be arbitrary, that completely unforeseen events can ruin careers and even end lives, that, in short, life is tragic.

But paradoxically the tragic view of life doesn't beget mere glumness. Instead, it teaches prudence which can be a good thing and occasionally a lifesaver. It actually inculcates a more profound appreciation of those moments of happiness and bliss, for the tragic view of life cautions us that these are not the products of will and planning, but rather mostly the result of serendipity. Those with the tragic view do not believe that everything must end in tragedy; rather, they believe that tragic endings are an ever present possibility.

[Contagion on a Small Planet](#)

Disaster experts have been warning that the world, because of the fast-rising density of human populations, needs to work now to avoid high death tolls in inevitable natural disasters. Public health experts similarly warn that vigilance and speed in tracking and

responding to disease outbreaks will be vital to limit the chances of a pandemic...

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[Women bear brunt of African hunger crisis](#)

Ancient traditions and modern circumstances often combine to place the burden on women to feed their poor families. Researchers say women do as much as 80 percent of the farm work in poor countries. And, with food and fertilizer prices rising, and AIDS and the global financial meltdown taking their toll, women like Ndwandwe are straining under growing responsibilities.

[A Workers' Paradise Found Off Japan's Coast](#)

"Hime Island is North Korea, just a livable version," Naokazu Koiwa said with a laugh. Mr. Koiwa, 32, repairs fishing boats.

Unsurprisingly, the current mayor, Akio Fujimoto, flatly rejects the North Korean comparison. Rather, he and most other islanders call Hime a repository for traditional Japanese values, like economic egalitarianism and social harmony. They say the rest of the nation has lost these in an embrace of more competitive capitalism, especially under the prime ministership of Junichiro Koizumi from 2001-6.

"Our thinking is, 'let's all share the economic pie and get along, instead of giving all of it to the rich,' " said Mr. Fujimoto, whose father, Kumao Fujimoto, devised the work-sharing system in the 1960s. "Avoiding competition is the traditional Japanese way."

[Baghdad Bombings: Is Iraq Unraveling Again?](#)

At least five bomb attacks in Iraq in the past 48 hours have left some 140 people dead, wounded dozens more and raised fears that the country may be returning to the sectarian violence from which it has only just emerged. On Thursday three bombs in central Baghdad and areas northeast of the capital killed at least 80 people and wounded more than 100. On Friday, a double suicide bombing at the most important Shi'ite shrine in Baghdad killed another 60 and injured 125 more. The bombs went off as people gathered for Friday prayers at the mosque and tomb where the prominent Shi'a saint Imam Mousa al-Kazim is buried. Last weekend, a pair of mortars or rockets slammed into the Green Zone, the first such attack since mid-January. The number of murders across Iraq that appear related to insurgent violence has also risen over the past few weeks.

[Americans Accused of Stealing Fuel in Iraq](#)

In a confidence game that made a mockery of the United States military's most secure compound in Iraq, a ring of Americans posing as contractors and their Nepalese drivers used tanker trucks, forged documents and sheer brazenness to steal at least \$40 million worth of jet and diesel fuel from an Army depot, according to an indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Virginia on Friday.

[Holdouts for Humble Bulb Defy a Government Phase-Out](#)

TUNBRIDGE WELLS, England — On a quaint lane called Camden Street, the sidewalk easel stands out for its apocalyptic tone: "100-WATT BULBS IN STOCK. (FOR HOW LONG WE DO NOT KNOW)"

"Let some government official come in and tell me I can't sell these," Jonathan Wright, who has owned Classic Lighting for 40 years, said defiantly as he surveyed his warren of upscale light fixtures and shelves filled with neatly stacked bulbs. "I'll find them wherever I can get them and sell them for whatever they cost. People are buying in bulk because they want them."

[IEA Sees Oil-Supply Crunch by 2013 on Slow Investment](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The International Energy Agency said the world may face a crude oil shortage by 2013 because of slower investments in oil exploration and production by OPEC members and other producing countries.

"I can't rule out the possibility of an oil supply constraint in 2013 and 2014," Nobuo Tanaka, Paris-based IEA's executive director, said in an interview in Tokyo today. "Investments have dropped, and if this continues, an oil crunch would emerge."

[Gulf OPEC sees \\$50 oil price pragmatic for now](#)

Gulf oil producers said on Sunday they can tolerate moderate crude prices for longer to help revive global growth, but shared a concern with consumer nations that a prolonged period of low prices could sow the seeds of a future fuel price spike.

[Qatar says low oil price threatens Middle East economies](#)

Tokyo: The drop in oil prices is reducing income in the Middle East and threatening the economic stability of producing countries, Qatar's oil minister said on Sunday.

"For the first time in a quarter century, world demand for oil is falling; the price has

collapsed since July 2008," Abdulla Bin Hamad Al Attiyah said at the Asia Ministerial Energy Roundtable in Tokyo.

"Companies almost everywhere are freezing investment and re-evaluating energy projects based on high prices," he said.

[Oil Price Volatility Has "Serious" Risk, Naimi Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The volatility in oil prices "poses serious risks" of future spikes as then global recession curbs investment in energy projects that would boost future supply, Saudi Arabia's oil minister said.

"Price extremes have been unjustifiable and unsustainable," Ali al-Naimi said in the text of a speech delivered at the 3rd Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable in Tokyo today. "I have often cautioned that if prices remain too low for too long, they can carry the seeds of future price spikes and volatility."

[Iran Meeting More Than 90% of OPEC Quota Target, Official Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Iran, OPEC's second-largest producer, is now meeting "more than 90 percent" of its output target as part of the group's commitment to reduce exports, said Hossein Noghrekar Shirazi, a deputy minister at the country's Ministry of Petroleum.

"What we have committed, we are performing," said Shirazi, on the sidelines of the 3rd Asia Ministerial Energy Roundtable today in Tokyo. "As for the reports by some of the secondary sources, we have said that some of them are not reporting accurately for various reasons."

[Chinaoil emerges as major force in crude trading](#)

SINGAPORE: Chinaoil, trading arm of state refiner PetroChina, has been the most active player on crude oil during the Asian Platts window this month, signalling its aim to become a major market force, rivalling peer Unipet.

[Thoughts on the Current Restructuring of Global Oil Demand](#)

The global financial crisis may be hastening a process that's been underway the entire decade: the restructuring of global oil demand. Western OECD oil demand has been much slower the past 15 years and its growth *rate* started to stall out again as early as 2004. The more spectacular leg of the advance in the price of oil was therefore built in large part on non-OECD demand. Of course. While this looks like a tidy and easy-to-read set of circumstances, however, it's actually a bit more complicated than merely

splitting the world in two.

[David Strahan: A Government still addicted to petrol](#)

Some applauded policies such as the extra subsidy for offshore wind and investment in building efficiency, but attacked overall funding of £1.4bn as miserly in comparison to the enormity of the climate crisis and recent financial bailouts.

But for those who are more worried about oil depletion, the Budget was utterly hollow. The car scrappage scheme came without efficiency conditions attached, the return to inflation-plus fuel duty increases was welcome but timid compared to the escalator that was killed off by the petrol protests of 2000, and tax breaks for North Sea operators will do little to stem the decline in output. Production has halved since its peak in 1999, and is now dropping at 7 per cent a year, dragging Britain ever deeper into import dependency.

[Ban petrol cars from 2015, says Norway's Finance Minister Kristin Halvorsen](#)

A PROPOSAL to ban sales of new petrol-powered cars in Norway from 2015 could help spur struggling carmakers to shift to greener models, Finance Minister Kristin Halvorsen said.

"This is much more realistic than people think when they first hear about this proposal," she said, defending a plan by her Socialist Left Party to outlaw sales of cars that run solely on fossil fuels in six years' time.

[Reports of Pontiac's end sadden fans of muscular brand](#)

(CNN) -- Pontiac owners around the United States are feeling nostalgic amid reports that cash-strapped General Motors will end one of its most coveted brands.

[Crude May Rally to \\$70, Shuaa's Effat Says: Technical Analysis](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Oil may break free from its trading range in the third quarter and rally to \$70 a barrel, according to technical analysis by Shuaa Capital PSC, the United Arab Emirates' biggest bank.

Oil in New York is in a "bottoming process," bound in a range between \$38 and \$55, according to Nabil Effat, Dubai-based Shuaa's chief technical analyst. Crude futures reached a year- to-date high of \$54.66 on March 26.

"Clearing the \$55-a-barrel resistance should trigger more buying with a target area of \$65 to \$70 a barrel," Effat said in a telephone interview from Dubai.

[Oil Minister stresses importance of investment in oil sector](#)

Kuwait will proceed with planned oil investment and expansion projects with an eye to achieve its production target for 2020 at 4 million barrels per day (bpd), Kuwaiti Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah reaffirmed on Sunday.

Addressing Asia's major oil producers and consumers at a one-day meeting here, Sheikh Ahmad said that Kuwait sticks to a plan to build a refinery in China with a capacity of 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) by teaming up with Asia's top oil refiner Sinopec Corp., as well as a 200,000-bpd refinery in Vietnam through joint venture with Japanese firms and Petrovietnam.

[Talisman to invest \\$1.1 bil. in Vietnam oil fields](#)

Canada's Talisman Energy plans to invest US\$1.1 billion to develop commercial production of two offshore oilfields in Vietnam, a newspaper reported Friday.

Dau Tu newspaper quoted Michael Horn, Talisman's representative in Vietnam, as saying the company would make the investment in Hai Su Trang and Hai Su Den fields.

[Reveal carbon risks, oil firms told](#)

Oil giants involved in the exploitation of tar sand fields face calls this week to disclose future carbon liabilities. Co-operative Financial Services (CFS) and environmental charity WWF-UK are launching a campaign for a legal requirement for companies including Shell and BP to include this information in financial reporting.

[Oil worker released by militants](#)

A British oil worker kidnapped by militants in Nigeria has been released by his captors.

The man is believed to be 27-year-old Alan Preston, from Edinburgh, who was seized in Port Harcourt three weeks ago.

The armed group who took him hostage also killed Mr Preston's police guard.

[West traps Russia in its own backyard](#)

When he addressed the Munich security conference in February, Biden offered to reset

the button in US-Russia relations. However, despite many positive signals and an overall lowering of rhetoric, the moves so far have been by and large symbolic. Across Eurasia, the signs are to the contrary. The Great Game is picking up momentum. The sharp fall in oil prices has complicated Russia's economic recovery, which in turn would disrupt the dynamics of the integration processes under Moscow's leadership - political, military and economic - in the post-Soviet space.

[US Proposes "Variable Geometry"](#)

CARACAS (IPS) - The United States will work on energy issues with the other countries of the Americas based on "a variable geometry," allowing governments to choose to cooperate in some areas but not others, said Jeremy Martin, head of the energy programme at the Institute of the Americas at the University of California San Diego.

This "a la carte" approach would make it possible to work with Venezuela on the heavy crudes in its Orinoco Belt and with Brazil on ethanol, or with Mexico and Brazil on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, because the marriage of energy and climate change means Washington can no longer talk about one without the other, the U.S. expert said at a forum in Caracas.

[Kjell Aleklett: Colin Campbell and 100 months of Peak Oil](#)

Colin Cambell has now written newsletters for 100 months. 100 months is a long tenure. In his first letter he introduced the world to a new term, "Peak Oil". I first made contact with Colin by email in the autumn of 2000 when I needed a little information for a figure and I believe that it was in December of the same year that I first spoke with him by telephone. He was then writing that which would become newsletter number 1. He spoke about the idea of an organisation that would study the peak of oil production and the name "Association for the Study of the Oil Peak" was mentioned. But the acronym ASOP did not roll off the tongue in the right way so the suggestion to swap the words around to say Peak Oil was discussed. The acronym became ASPO and the term "Peak Oil" was coined.

[A Lean, Green Detroit](#)

American tastes dominated the world's automotive market for a century, but all that's changing now. Today it's the increasingly well-to-do Chinese car-buyer that industry wants to woo and win, thanks to this incredible fact—China has, over the last three months running, surpassed the U.S. in terms of volume sales of automobiles. Ever wonder why Ford's new Fiesta has an instrument panel that looks like a cell phone? Because that's what's familiar to its target audience of 20- and 30-something Chinese.

[My money's on China to produce world-changing electric car](#)

Once in a while an invention comes along that changes the world: Gunpowder. Printing press. Steam engine. Telegraph. Telephone. Model T Ford. Television. Computers - first mainframes, then PCs. The Internet. And now - maybe - the electric car.

I'm not talking hybrids here. I am talking a pure electric that runs on batteries, travels 200 kilometres on one charge, drives fast, consumes electricity equivalent to the cost of a gasoline engine getting 240 mpg, needs a one-hour charge for each travel hour - yet costs less than \$25,000 and can be fixed by the local electrician and bicycle repairman.

['Smart grid' presents great promise, complications](#)

WASHINGTON - One warm August afternoon in 2003, a power failure originating in Ohio coursed through the northeastern section of the electrical grid, sparking the nation's largest blackout ever and leaving millions in eight states without air conditioning, traffic lights or cell phone service.

A "smart grid" might have averted a shutdown that cost an estimated \$6 billion.

That new grid - a digital network allowing utilities, consumers and alternative sources of renewable energy to "talk" to one another - could steer electricity to where it is needed most, avert cascading energy bottlenecks and promote power from alternative sources.

[Republicans push nuclear energy to lower costs](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. should build 100 more nuclear plants rather than spend "billions in subsidies" for renewable energy if it is truly committed to lowering electric bills and having clean air, the Republicans say.

[California rule could end ethanol's honeymoon](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - California's newly adopted low-carbon fuel standard may mark the beginning of the end of ethanol's coveted status as the sole U.S. alternative motor fuel.

[Making every hour an Earth Hour](#)

On the subject of motorised transport, we've also made a commitment not to upgrade our at-times troublesome VW Golf. We have no intention of ever trading it in for a newer model, and we now don't bother getting dents and scratches repaired. We keep up the maintenance and road costs, but that's it.

As long as it goes, right? If the peak oil theorists are right, there seems little point buying a newer car when the one we have could be obsolete in our lifetime.

[Winds of change blow for offshore power operators](#)

It's official: it's getting windier down south. This unexpected quirk of climate change has given a much needed boost to offshore wind-farm developers.

For those struggling to make the economics of hugely expensive wind farms work, more wind equals more money.

[Protester 'offered cash by police'](#)

Matilda Gifford, 24, a member of a group arrested at a demonstration at Aberdeen airport in March, recorded conversations with two men said to be members of Strathclyde Police. A possible financial deal was discussed that could have helped Ms Gifford with her student loan fees. "You wouldn't pay any tax on it. So you could do with it what you want," she was told.

[Greenhouse Gases Continue To Climb Despite Economic Slump](#)

ScienceDaily — Two of the most important climate change gases increased last year, according to a preliminary analysis for NOAA's annual greenhouse gas index, which tracks data from 60 sites around the world.

['Climate change' forces Eskimos to abandon village](#)

(CNN) -- The indigenous people of Alaska have stood firm against some of the most extreme weather conditions on Earth for thousands of years. But now, flooding blamed on climate change is forcing at least one Eskimo village to move to safer ground.

[Levees can't save New Orleans from floods: report](#)

HOUSTON (Reuters) - Bigger, higher and stronger levees cannot save New Orleans from the worst floods and the city remains vulnerable to a repeat of Hurricane Katrina, the National Academy of Sciences said on Friday.

...Authorities should discourage settlement in flood-prone areas and encourage voluntary relocation away from them, the report said.



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