



Drumbeat: April 28, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on April 28, 2009 - 9:48am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Has "Peak Oil" Peaked?](#)

It is always interesting to watch what happens when the media latches onto a given issue and then, as the reality on the ground evolves — sometimes radically — the media fails to catch up to, or even monitor, the changes. This means the public is stuck with an outdated version of conventional wisdom which, even if it were true in the first place, is no longer so.

With oil prices falling by more than two-thirds last year before a slight rebound, the "peak oil" frenzy seems to have abated for now. Even its proponents must admit that high oil prices were driven in large part by a huge spike in demand (which has now fallen) and not just scarcity (whether real or sinisterly implied by those who hold oil reserves).

But even though the hysteria has died down, new technologies march on, quietly changing the rules of the debate (if, that is, there still were a debate).

[Ramirez threatens oil service companies](#)

Venezuela's Oil Minister Rafael Ramirez has threatened to take over oil service companies that fail to agree on new rates for their services, in one of several comments made to oil workers.

"To those contractors who stopped work during the 2002 oil strike, we've told them it's time to settle accounts and rates, change our relationship, or we will take over those companies," Ramirez told PDVSA employees during a videoconference last Friday, according to a full transcript of the speech published today.

[Russian, Bulgarian premiers iron out disagreements on South Stream gas pipeline](#)

MOSCOW (AP) — Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that Russia and Bulgaria have set aside their differences over the proposed South Stream gas pipeline to Europe, paving the way for an agreement within the next couple of weeks.

"We have no disagreements left," Putin said at a televised news conference with his Bulgarian counterpart. "Our earlier disagreements were purely technical."

[Valero Energy Profit Rises on Higher Refining Margins](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Valero Energy Corp., the largest U.S. oil refiner, said first-quarter profit rose 18 percent on increased margins for processing crude into gasoline and other petroleum products.

Net income rose to \$309 million, 59 cents a share, from \$261 million, or 48 cents, a year earlier, San Antonio-based Valero said today in a statement. The per-share results beat by 9 cents the average of 18 analyst estimates compiled by Bloomberg. Sales fell 50 percent to \$13.8 billion.

[Saskatchewan could produce more conventional oil than Alberta: Boyd](#)

Saskatchewan could soon surpass Alberta in conventional oil production, Saskatchewan's energy minister says.

"The positive trend line for Saskatchewan is increasing and Alberta is going the other direction ... and it's great news for the province," Energy and Resources Minister Bill Boyd said Monday at an oil industry conference in Regina.

[Utica part of statewide 'hydrogen highway' plan](#)

Utica is part of a plan being worked out between General Motors and the state to develop a "hydrogen highway" of filling stations across New York.

The line of stations would allow fuel cell cars now under development to drive from one end of the state to the other.

Utica is the site of one of several planned filling stations. Other possibilities include Buffalo and Syracuse. Stations already exist near New York City, Rochester and West Point. There are about 100 stations nationwide.

[Two Cal professors to get \\$30M from DOE for carbon capture work](#)

The Department of Energy will pay \$30 million over five years to two professors at the University of California, Berkeley, for research on cleaning up power plant pollution.

Professors Berend Smit and Donald DePaolo will get \$2 million and \$4 million a year, respectively, to seek better ways to clean carbon out of the emissions from power plants

and natural gas wells and to put it underground.

[BP Delays First Oil Production From Sunrise Project With Husky](#)

(Bloomberg) -- BP Plc, Europe's second-largest oil company, delayed production of the first heavy oil from the Sunrise oil-sands project in Alberta, its joint venture with Husky Energy Inc., for at least a year.

The partners are now expecting to start producing bitumen in 2013 or 2014, the London-based company said today in an update posted on its Web site. The companies plan to sanction the project in 2010.

[Petrobras 'Comfortable' Starting Presalt at Current Oil Prices](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Petroleo Brasileiro SA, Brazil's state-controlled oil company, is "comfortable" starting production at the country's pre-salt oil fields at current oil prices, the company's refining unit head said.

[Qatari Jumbo Tanker Sails to U.K. Port, Depressing Gas Prices](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The U.K. will get its biggest shipment of liquefied natural gas next week as a jumbo tanker from Qatar arrives at the South Hook LNG import terminal, depressing fuel prices after earlier gains today.

A South Hook spokeswoman said the expected arrival time is "on or around May 5" for the Mozah, a so-called Q-Max tanker with a capacity of 268,000 cubic meters of liquefied gas. That's almost enough to supply all of the U.K.'s gas on a summer day.

[Sinopec Profit Soars 85% as Fuel-Price Controls Ease](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China Petroleum & Chemical Corp., Asia's biggest refiner, said profit jumped 85 percent in the first quarter after the government eased fuel-price controls and crude oil fell from a record.

[Kuwait, China hope to agree on refinery location](#)

Kuwait's oil minister said Tuesday he hoped to reach a final agreement with China on a long-stalled project to build a \$9 billion refinery and petrochemical venture in the Asian nation's south.

[Iraq owes Kuwait 25.5 bln dlrs in war damages](#)

KUWAIT CITY - Iraq owes Kuwait 25.5 billion dollars of war reparations for the 1990 occupation of the oil-rich emirate by Saddam Hussein's forces, a Kuwaiti official said on Tuesday.

The compensation claims, approved by the United Nations, have yet to be paid by Baghdad, head of Kuwait's Public Authority for Compensation Khaled al-Mudhaf was cited as saying by the KUNA news agency.

[Geothermal explosion rocks green energy hopes](#)

The bid to produce green power on a commercial scale using heat mined from subterranean rocks – or "hot rocks" – has suffered a major setback, with the breach of a four-kilometre-deep well on Friday in the Cooper Basin in South Australia.

[BP solar profits slump](#)

BP has reported a slump in sales of solar panels and falling profits at its alternative energy division. Overall, BP group profits fell by almost two-thirds in the first three months of the year compared with the same period last year. The company mainly blamed lower oil prices and higher taxes at its Russian subsidiary TNK-BP.

[Icebergs break away from Antarctic iceshelf](#)

PARIS (AFP) – A huge iceshelf that has wrenched away from the Antarctic peninsula has started to fracture into icebergs, the European Space Agency (ESA) here said on Tuesday.

"Satellite images show that icebergs have begun to calve (break away) from the northern front of the Wilkins Ice Shelf -- indicating that the huge shelf has become unstable," it said in a statement.

[Bill McKibben: Waste Not, Want Not](#)

There's waste that comes from doing something that manifestly doesn't need doing. A hundred million trees are cut every year just to satisfy the junk-mail industry. You can argue about cutting trees for newspapers, or magazines, or Bibles, or symphony scores –but the cascade of stuffporn that arrives daily in our mailboxes? It wastes forests, and also our time. Which, actually, is precious—we each get about 30,000 days, and it makes one a little sick to calculate how many of them have been spent opening credit card

offers.

[Wind farm firm cutting 1,900 jobs](#)

Wind turbine-maker Vestas Wind Systems is to cut 1,900 jobs - mainly in the UK and Denmark - despite reporting a 70% rise in quarterly profits.

It will be closing its UK turbine plant on the Isle of Wight, cutting 450 jobs.

The Danish firm blamed the headcount reduction, which represents 9% of its workforce, on market oversupply.

[Clean Coal: Not Ready for Prime Time Yet](#)

The battle over coal is basically a battle over two equally dramatic points of view: Coal opponents such as NASA scientist James Hansen say, essentially, either we quit the coal habit or the planet gets it. Energy types such as Mr. Rogers respond, if we try to quit coal now, the economy gets it.

[Some Economic Implications of Peak Oil](#)

World oil production probably peaked in 2008. Liquid fuel production, including oil, is indicated by the OPEC data to have reached a peak in July 2008 at about 86 million barrels per day, with its price peaking at about the same time. ASPO International agrees, as indicated on the chart page of their recent newsletters.

Peak oil has profound economic implications, most of which are unwelcome. There is good evidence indicating that peak oil triggered the global economic crisis; that oil price was the limiting factor that broke the momentum as the global economy tried to keep expanding.

[Pound-the-Table Time?](#)

There is an old lawyer's saying, "When the facts are against, you argue the law. When the law is against you, argue the facts. When the law and the facts are both against you, pound the table."

For the advocates of holding on to the old fossil fuel economy, last week strongly suggested that as the science and the economics move decisively against them, it is table-pounding time.

[Italian magazine interviews Richard Heinberg](#)

Consapevole: Why hasn't peak oil entered the political agenda yet? Is it because of the opposition of the oil industry, or simply because it is an unspeakable truth?

Heinberg: The oil industry has played a role in preventing discussion of peak oil by understating the challenges of maintaining production growth given the decline in discovery of new oilfields, as well as the declining rates of production in existing giant oilfields. However, it is also the case that new issues require time to be understood by the media, policy makers, and the general public. It is only within the past five years that general discussion of peak oil has emerged. By comparison, climate change has been a significant topic for well over a decade.

[The United Nations Must Manage a Global Food Reserve](#)

In this paper, we examine the underlying causes of the recent rice crisis and assess the effectiveness of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (asean) Emergency Rice Reserve, the East Asia Emergency Rice Reserve, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (saarc) Food Security Reserve in addressing past and present world rice crises. In addition, we provide some recommendations for a global food reserve as an alternative to the existing regional rice reserves. We also suggest measures to improve rice productivity in rice-producing countries, strengthen market information in order to increase stocks, and better determine the production capacity and demand for each participating country and their consequent contribution to the global food reserve.

[An economics addition to *The Transition Handbook*](#)

Since the first edition of the Transition Handbook was published, huge and far-reaching changes have begun unfolding in the world economy. For many, they are seen as the outcome of the end of the age of cheap oil, the inevitable result of the inability of a global economy addicted to oil unable to get its fix, and in particular a result of the oil price spike of July 2008, with speculators escalating oil to a high of \$147 a barrel, a price at which, quite clearly, the world economy as we know it is unable to function.

A useful place to start in an exploration of what exactly is happening to the global economy, in particular in the light of how it relates to peak oil and climate change, is with a look at what are the assumptions we have made thus far about the economy. Do they still hold after the events of recent months? Did they ever actually make sense in the first place? What are the assumptions about the economy and the financial system, as well as about the basic resources, both natural and cultural, on which we have based our decisions for the last 50 years - are they still valid?

[Petrobras Increases Gas Flaring Due to Drop in Demand](#)

Brazilian state-controlled oil giant Petrobras has increased gas flaring, or the burning of natural gas, in recent months due to a drop in demand for the fuel, the Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper reported Sunday.

Petrobras burned some 8.1 million cubic meters per day of natural gas at its offshore platforms in February, or an amount equivalent to about one-third of the gas currently imported daily from Bolivia, the newspaper said, citing Energy and Mines Ministry figures.

[Oil demand to pick up in 2010](#)

The collapse in oil prices could end up cutting the growth in future oil supply in half from what would have been anticipated during the high price period, according to a study from Cambridge Energy Research Associates (CERA), an IHS company. The Long Aftershock concludes that about 7.6 million barrels per day (mbd) out of total potential future net growth of 14.5 mbd from 2009 to 2014 are "at risk."

"The inventory of potential new oilfield developments, including fields that could be developed and brought online during the next five years, remains adequate to meet likely demand in the medium to long term," says CERA senior director Peter Jackson, an author of the report. "This, however, depends on sufficient and timely investment."

[Aramco sells May Jubail lot to Vitol](#)

Saudi Aramco, the world's top oil explorer, has sold 90,000 tonnes of cracked 380-centistoke (cst) fuel oil from Jubail for lifting on May 12 to Vitol at similar discounts to previous deals, traders said.

...Fewer arbitrage barrels are expected to land in Asia in May -- falling about 18-20 per cent from April -- as European refiners slash capacity on poor margins.

Middle Eastern supplies are also shrinking in line with the peak summer demand season, soaking up fuel oil for domestic power generation.

[India: Steel sector to get priority in gas allocation from KG basin](#)

The steel industry will be accorded priority in allocation of natural gas from Reliance Industries Krishna Godavari basin once the initial fuel production exceeds 40 mmscmd, official sources said.

[Nigeria: Inside Abuja's Flourishing Fuel Black Market](#)

Prices of fuel in Abuja's black market rose astronomically when queues appeared at filling stations across the city penultimate week as the speculation of impending fuel shortage made the rounds.

Investigation by Daily Trust revealed that most black marketers who had before the fuel scarcity sold their products for 100 naira per litre now sell for as high as 350 and 450 naira per litre. The price could be more or less and the differences in price depend on many considerations. The sharp-minded fuel racketeers size you and your car up, the status of the particular part of the city, the length of the queues by the surrounding fuel stations, and so on, before they bill you.

[Saudi Aims to Attract Vehicle Manufacturers](#)

DUBAI - Saudi Arabia is seeking to attract vehicle and consumer goods manufacturers to build factories as the kingdom seeks to benefit from cheap crude oil to expand its economy and create jobs, according to state-run Saudi Aramco.

[Rally in Hawaii pushes for power plant ban](#)

Supported by Hawaii's Republican governor, environmentalists cheered for a proposal Monday that would force Hawaii to break its oil addiction by banning construction of new fossil fuel power plants.

More than 100 people at the rally in the Hawaii Capitol rotunda - complete with a solar-powered sound system - urged state lawmakers to pass the bill, which is being debated this week.

Many majority Democrats in the Legislature support the spirit of the measure, but they say it probably won't pass because of worries that an outright ban on additional fossil fuel generating capacity could limit the state's options in an energy crisis.

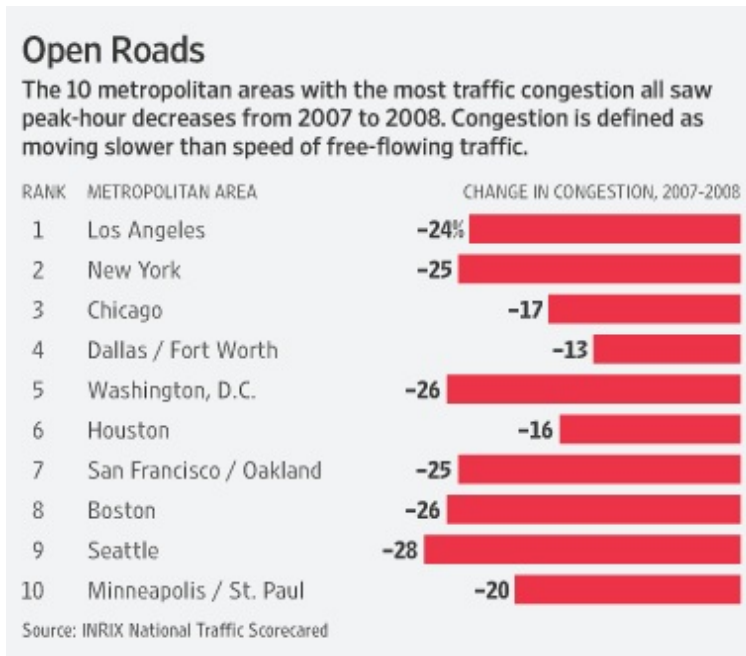
[Simmons: Energy industry facing enormous challenges](#)

"At the peak of the boom everyone prospered," he said at the April 22 event in Wichita Falls, presented by the Texas Alliance of Energy Producers. "High prices created the first genuine win-win-win we ever had, but too many people were saying these high prices will hurt the economy. Then came the collapse."

By his assessment, Simmons said that for two decades the prices of gas and oil were so low that the energy consumers were the only winners.

"The energy consumers were living in a fool's paradise," he said. "...But the consumer party had to end. As oil and gas prices rose the consumers got angry. There was a period of time last year that I think every single morning that I saw the Today Show on the first story was 'Pain at the Pump.'"

[Commutes Speed Up as Fewer Drive](#)



CHICAGO -- As unemployment rises and discretionary income shrinks, millions fewer Americans are driving. For commuters, that means some of the worst bottlenecks in the country are easing.

Americans drove 8.6 billion fewer miles in January and February than during the same months in 2008, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. Mileage has been declining since the end of 2007.

[Mideast growth to halve as oil falls: World Bank](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa is set to halve to 3 percent this year with the collapse of oil prices, demand and worker remittances, a senior World Bank official said on Tuesday.

Daniela Gressani, World Bank vice president for the region, said countries outside the Gulf such as Iran, Syria and Algeria, which have expensive state subsidy programs, will be hit the hardest by lower oil prices.

[Swine flu could hit already ailing fuel demand](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The widening outbreak of swine flu could further quash already weak jet fuel demand if it grows to rival the SARS epidemic that hit global travel six years ago.

[Mexico's Woes: Quakes, Flu and Oil Production Collapse](#)

Reluctantly I'm going to briefly cover Mexico today. Your RSS newsreader and your Bloomberg however are already, no doubt, filled up with reports from Mexico's Flu Zone. Or Quake Zone. Or both. Instead, I lightly suggest you turn your attention away from these acute conditions, to something more chronic: the relentless crash in Mexico's oil production.

[Student Speakers Call for Proper Energy Use](#)

DUBAI - Collapse of civilisation, unemployment and dangerous consumption of oil were some of the foreboding predictions made at an environmental speaking series presented on Monday at Knowledge Village in Dubai.

Instead of policy makers or environmental advocates, the speakers were 13 and 15-year olds from high schools in the UAE, participating in the ninth oratory competition held by Emirates Environmental Group.

The speech prompts — 'reducing water-energy footprint' and 'is this the peak oil era?' — touched on issues particularly critical to the UAE, which uses costly desalination to obtain drinking water and is a net exporter of oil.

[Saudi Investing to Boost Oil Production, Finance Minister Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's largest economy, is investing to increase oil production capacity to provide for the global economy when it starts to recover from the economic crisis, the finance minister said.

"Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world that's now investing in oil capacity and more refining capacity," Finance Minister Ibrahim Abdel Aziz al-Assaf said at a conference in Washington today. "I'm sure that this investment will come in handy when the world economy starts recovering."

[PetroChina to raise storage capacity for Russian oil](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) - PetroChina's largest Daqing oilfield will add eight large crude oil storage tanks by 2010 after having installed two such tanks for offloading Russian oil, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

The 10 tanks alone, with planned capacity of 150,000 cubic metres each, will boost Daqing's crude oil storage capacity by nearly 10 million barrels, as China is set to ship in more Russian oil following the recent oil-for-loan deals between the two countries,

Xinhua said in a report over the weekend.

[BP, Chevron Managers Leave Kuwait as Projects Delayed](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Chevron Corp. and BP Plc are withdrawing top executives from Kuwait after more than a decade of negotiations failed to gain access to the world's fourth-largest crude oil reserves.

[Khursaniyah 'under starter's orders'](#)

The central gas processing facility at state oil giant Saudi Aramco's 500,000 barrels per day Khursaniyah oilfield is expected to begin operations by October, according to reports.

The plant had been due to come on stream in December 2007, but construction had been delayed due to a shortage of labour and materials, a source said.

"The gas plant has two trains. The first one will be ready to start operations in July and the second train by October," a source told Reuters.

[Ex Central Bank director believes that Venezuela may sell Citgo](#)

Domingo Maza Zavala, the former director of the Central Bank of Venezuela, said on Monday that Venezuela may ponder the possibility of selling Citgo, Pdvsa's oil refining branch in the United States, because of the decline of revenues.

Maza Zavala told Venezuelan radio station Unión Radio that the Venezuelan government would even negotiate the Orinoco Oil Belt and some state assets to get funds and survive another year.

[Can science save the oil sands?](#)

FORT McMURRAY, ALTA. — If Selma Guigard is right, an elusive key to reducing the oil sands' emissions could lie in the science of the super-critical molecule.

[Solving The Chalk Mystery To Generate Billions In Additional Income For Oil Industry](#)

ScienceDaily — A piece of chalk in a laboratory at the University of Stavanger in Norway may be the key to unlock a great mystery. If the mystery is solved, it will generate billions in additional income for the oil industry. Associate Professor Merete Vadla

Madland at the Department of Petroleum Engineering at the University of Stavanger is leading a group of geologists, petroleum engineers, rock mechanics, physicists, mathematicians and chemists who are now switching between modelling and experimental testing at the chalk laboratory.

[China's Petro-Shopping Spree](#)

Armed with loads of ready cash, China has been on a shopping spree for oil resources. Over the past few months, Chinese companies have committed tens of billions of dollars as part of a government-sponsored oil and petrochemical stimulus plan to secure energy supplies.

[Petro-Canada Posts Quarterly Loss on Oil's Decline](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Petro-Canada, the Canadian oil company that agreed last month to a takeover by Suncor Energy Inc., posted a first-quarter loss on lower crude prices, higher costs and charges from deferring an oil-sands project.

The net loss was C\$47 million (\$38.4 million), or 10 cents a share, compared with net income of C\$1.08 billion, or C\$2.20, a year earlier, the Calgary-based company said today in a statement. Petro-Canada cut its investment target for the year.

[BP profit tumbles 62% on sliding oil prices](#)

LONDON (AFP) – Oil major BP on Tuesday reported a 62-percent slide in first-quarter net profits to 1.639 billion pounds, as the price of crude halved.

The data excludes changes in the value of oil held in stock, a key measure for the industry, and compared to net profit totalling 4.279 billion pounds in the first quarter of 2008.

[South Dakota hearings start on crude oil pipeline](#)

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) -- Western South Dakota residents get their chance Monday and Tuesday to speak out about a planned crude oil pipeline that could one day carry 900,000 barrels of oil a day through the state.

[Fla. House passes bill to allow offshore drilling](#)

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- The promise of money and jobs and the desire to reduce dependence on foreign oil beat out arguments that offshore drilling could harm the

environment and hurt tourism as the House passed a bill Monday that could allow wells three miles off Florida's coast.

The governor and three-member Cabinet would be able to approve drilling leases in state waters between three and 10.5 miles from shore under the plan.

[Peak Oil as a Function of Earth's Volume](#)

So the fraction then of the stuff we kind of know about is ~0.1% of the earth's volume if my decimals are correct. Even if my math is bad, I think the conclusion is sound that we basically have very little idea what all is down there. There could be huge reserves of black gold just waiting for the right technology. Even just the "black smokers" discovered so far emit 17,000 million watts of energy roughly equivalent of the amount of energy that humans consume each year. (As quoted on the Discovery channel anyway).

[A key energy industry nervously awaits its 'rebirth'](#)

One of the biggest question marks in the nation's energy and climate policy is the future of nuclear power. In the past, the United States has made a major commitment to it. The U.S. nuclear power industry is the world's largest. The nation's 104 operating plants produce 20 percent of its electricity, making them, by far, the largest source of electricity that does not result in greenhouse gas emissions.

If a cap and a price are imposed on carbon dioxide emissions, these plants could be among the biggest economic winners in the vast economic shifts that would be created by greenhouse gas regulations.

[Little power price impact seen from U.S. renewable mandate](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - A proposed federal mandate to force power companies to provide up to 25 percent renewable energy by 2025 is likely to have little impact on electric prices through 2020 and negligible impact after 2030, the Energy Information Administration said in a study Monday.

The largest impact would likely be seen in 2025 when the renewable electricity standard would go into effect, boosting average prices by up to 2.9 percent, EIA projected.

[Putting A Price On Smart Power](#)

An improved electric grid could potentially make electricity more reliable, more

efficient, cleaner and perhaps even cheaper. But what would it cost to actually build it, and how much would it save?

The answer isn't simple. It's difficult to put a price tag on a new grid, and almost impossible to quantify the potential savings.

[Solar powered airports? It could happen](#)

Jet contrails may be adding to global warming but on the ground, many airports are getting very green. During last week's Earth Day celebration air travelers could get free recycling tips at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's energy fair, free tote bags at Denver International Airport, and free plantable postcards embedded with wildflowers at Boston's Logan Airport. And all during April, aka Earth Month, airports around the country trumpeted their successes with recycling, solid-waste reduction, hybrid vehicle adoption, air quality improvement programs, and other eco-friendly actions. One exciting trend: solar and wind power projects that may eventually allow some airports to operate off the grid. Here are just some of the airports generating their own juice.

[How to turn greenhouse gas into a clean fuel](#)

CONVERTING a greenhouse gas into a clean-burning fuel offers two benefits for the price of one. That's the thinking behind a novel process for converting carbon dioxide into methanol at room temperature, developed by a team at the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology in Singapore.

[With high-speed rail, Obama is on the right track](#)

Every now and then I get a strange sense that sanity is beginning to prevail in the world. It happened last week when I heard of Barack Obama's plan to spend \$13 billion to establish high-speed passenger rail corridors throughout the United States.

I can only hope Canada will follow the American lead on this one.

[An Open Letter to President Obama on Biofuels](#)

Many individuals, universities and companies have been working diligently to help create renewable biofuels to meet the strategic needs of our country. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has announced the selection of numerous research projects and provided technology investment agreements or cooperative agreements to help develop at least 15 commercial or demonstration facilities since start of 2007. Despite this, recent forecasts indicate that, unless we do something different, we will fail to meet the renewable fuel standards (RFS) set forth in the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) of 2007.

Numerous studies have been released on this topic. One such study reported that, "Even at high oil prices, 2nd generation biofuels will probably not become fully commercial nor enter the market for several years without significant additional government support." What is needed is an immediate, comprehensive study to determine requirements for the full commercialization cycle. Once these requirements are known, we can apply them to those projects whose completion is necessary to meet our needs. The need is urgent, as 3 of the 15 funded projects that received DOE awards have already stopped plans to go forward. Unless something radically different is done, more projects are likely to drop out.

[Lifting the ban on importation of palm oil](#)

Today in Malaysia, palm oil brings export earnings worth US\$ 6.2 billion, only trailing crude oil exports. But compared to crude oil, palm plantations create considerably more jobs, currently employing around 14% of the countries entire workforce. Around half of all palm oil is still produced by smallholders, that is, by individual farming families. In short, the Malaysian economy and society as a whole benefits immensely from the African palm.

Given these numbers, it is not difficult to understand why many developing countries are looking into replicating Malaysia's success story. With Peak Oil around the corner, and continuously rising energy prices, the temptation to massively use one's land to cultivate the energy crop is strong.

[Philippines to slash coal use](#)

The Philippines plans to reduce its energy dependence on coal over the next five years to lessen carbon emissions which contribute to climate change, an official from the Department of Energy (DoE) said Tuesday.

"Part of the plan is to reduce the share of coal in the total energy generation mix from more than 20 percent at present to a range of 10 to 15 percent in five years," said Energy Undersecretary Zamzamin Ampatuan.

[Obama seeks reversal of mountaintop mining rule](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is taking steps to reverse a last-minute Bush-era rule that allows mountaintop mining waste to be dumped near streams.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said Monday the administration will ask a federal court to abandon the rule that made it easier for coal mining companies to dump waste near streams. If the court agrees, the Obama administration could start drafting a new

regulation that better protects waterways and communities sooner than if it sought to rewrite the measure itself.

[The next seafood frontier: The ocean](#)

Now the 29-year-old entrepreneur is trying the same model on a global scale. Starting this June, his latest company, Open Blue Sea Farms, aims to fly 30,000 live baby cobia every month from Miami to Panama City in the cargo hold of a Boeing 757. After being placed in tanks near the famous canal, the fish will travel by boat to their new home, a floating wire mesh globe as tall as a six-story building that will be moored to the Atlantic Ocean floor, 220 feet below.

If O'Hanlon succeeds in selling fish bred in this unique structure, dubbed the AquaPod, he could revolutionize an industry in crisis. Fish stocks are being rapidly depleted the world over. Consumer demand seems bottomless, and industrial fishing fleets have become too efficient for their own good. Ocean stocks of large fish - such as tuna, cod and halibut - have declined by 90% in the past 50 years, according to a recent study published in the science journal *Nature*.

Scientists warn that the oceans could be completely fishless in less than 40 years - a catastrophe for all life within them.

[Green Agenda May Shift Farm Policy](#)

Democratic Party control of the House of Representatives, Senate and White House means that action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is likely--perhaps as early as this year. Agricultural producers and agribusinesses are concerned about the impact of new regulations on their industry, because it appears increasingly unlikely that it will be exempt from new rules. However, instead of resisting climate change reforms, many agricultural lobby groups have shifted their emphasis to a pro-active examination of how to position the sector to benefit from climate change legislation.

[How to Live with Ecological Intelligence](#)

Trying to be "green" quickly becomes tricky. A simple question like "Paper or plastic?" can lead to a complicated analysis of deforestation and water use versus peak oil and persistent pollution.

That's why Daniel Goleman, best-selling author of *Emotional Intelligence* in 1995, has returned to the subject, but with an environmental angle.

[Death knell sounds for Europe's beekeepers](#)

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Europe's beekeeping industry could be wiped out in less than a decade as bees fall victim to disease, insecticides and intensive farming, international beekeeping body Apimondia said on Monday.

"With this level of mortality, European beekeepers can only survive another 8 to 10 years," Gilles Ratia, president of Apimondia, told Reuters.

[Diarrhoea near epidemic in Bangladesh heatwave](#)

DHAKA (AFP) – Cases of diarrhoea in Dhaka are reaching epidemic levels, according to a health expert, as the Bangladeshi capital is facing record temperatures, a severe water shortage and power cuts.

[U.S. pledges to make up for lost time in climate fight](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – The United States gathered China, India and the world's other top greenhouse gas polluters in Washington on Monday to "make up for lost time" and lay the groundwork for a U.N. deal to fight climate change.

The meeting, which U.S. President Barack Obama called last month, groups countries that produce about 75 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions to find ways to help seal a global warming pact this year.

[Time low in global warming fight: Prince Charles](#)

ROME (AFP) – Time is quickly running out in the battle against global warming, and history will judge the world's response to the crisis, Prince Charles of Britain told Italian lawmakers Monday.

"If we are to bequeath to our children a world that is fit to inhabit, then I fear we must act now," said Charles during a visit to Rome. "What on earth is the point of procrastinating?"

"History will judge us by how we respond to climate change. Do we want our children and grandchildren to ... see this as the time we allowed a new darkness to sprawl across our future?" he asked Italian lawmakers and other government leaders.

[Arctic CO2 levels growing at an 'unprecedented rate', say scientists](#)

"It is not the level of CO2 that is the problem, because the earth will adapt. What is very worrying is the speed of change. Levels [here] are now increasing 2-3ppm a year.

"The rate of increase is much faster than only 10-20 years ago. You can almost see the changes taking place. Never before have CO₂ levels increased so fast," he said.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).