



DrumBeat: July 18, 2009

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Empty Quarter holds its secrets](#)

A scramble for gas in Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter has turned into an exercise in futility.

Four teams of foreign partners have failed to make any major discoveries after five years of drilling, leaving Saudi Aramco, the state-owned company, to find and develop other fields across the kingdom.

After four consortiums of international partners have drilled 22 wells, only one team, from the Russian giant Lukoil, said it made a commercial-scale discovery but it remains unclear how significant the find is.

[OPEC says members to continue oil production cut](#)

LUANDA (Xinhua) -- Chairman of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Botelho de Vasconcelos said here at the weekend that OPEC member countries will continue to comply with the OPEC's decision on oil production cut.

[Saudi Aramco eyes contracts for new gas fields - MEED](#)

KHOBAR, Saudi Arabia (Reuters) - Saudi state oil giant Aramco is gauging contractors' interest for the construction of gas facilities at two fields to meet growing domestic demand, the Middle East Economic Digest weekly reported.

Citing unnamed sources, MEED said Aramco would award contracts for project management support and front-end engineering and design (FEED) for the Arabiyah and Shaybah fields in September.

[Reservoirs that cross country lines need special agreements](#)

Since nationalization of the Mexican oil industry in 1938, US and Mexican oil industry

activities in the Gulf of Mexico (GoM) have remained distant and independent, in spite of the significant investments made in each country during the last four decades. Now, however, the depletion of reserves onshore and in shallow waters is driving both countries to explore for new resources in deeper offshore areas close to their common borderlines.

[Is a Clean-Energy Economy Our 'Next Internet'?](#)

Just as the race from mainframes to smartphones made information free, surging innovation can make energy so abundant that it becomes nearly free.

[The Next Energy Innovators](#)

BusinessWeek and GreenBiz.com have assembled a list of 25 intriguing energy startups, including young companies that tap geothermal heat, turn waste into biodiesel, and more.

[IKEA is as bad as Wal-Mart](#)

My mother still owns, and uses, the same vacuum cleaner she bought early in her marriage, just after World War II. She still lives in the house my father -- not a carpenter by trade, but an electrician -- built in the early 1950s with the help of his brothers, a small but sturdy Cape Cod-style dwelling with hardwood floors and solid wood doors that close with a hearty, satisfying clunk (as opposed to the echoey click of hollow-core doors). Today the idea of anything -- a household appliance, a piece of furniture, a house -- being built to last is almost laughable. When your vacuum cleaner stops sucking, you most likely haul it out to the curb and trek to Target or a big-box home-goods store to replace it. Even if you could readily find someone to repair it, the trouble and the cost would be prohibitive. If you need a bookcase, there's always IKEA: Sure, you'd prefer to buy a sturdily built hardwood version that doesn't buckle under the weight of actual books, but who has extra dough to spend on stuff like that? The IKEA bookcase is good enough, for now if not forever.

That cycle of consumption seems harmless enough, particularly since we live in a country where there are plenty of cheap goods to go around. But in her lively and terrifying book "Cheap: The High Cost of Discount Culture," Ellen Ruppel Shell pulls back the shimmery, seductive curtain of low-priced goods to reveal their insidious hidden costs. Those all-you-can-eat Red Lobster shrimps may very well have come from massive shrimp-farming spreads in Thailand, where they've been plumped up with antibiotics and possibly tended by maltreated migrant workers from Burma, Cambodia and Vietnam. The made-in-China toy train you bought your kid a few Christmases ago may have been sprayed with lead paint -- and the spraying itself may have been done by a child laborer, without the benefit of a protective mask.

[Sun Shines on Turbine Makers](#)

Deep inside what is often described as the 'inhospitable' environment of the desert, Abu Dhabi is warming to the idea of solar power. A 1 25 MVV solar power plant will be the biggest of its kind in the world. This rich and forward-looking Emirate, surrounded by the most prosperous oil nations on Earth, is going 'green'. And 'inhospitable' the desert is not. Locked in a sunbelt that encircles the Earth, Abu Dhabi aims to generate 1 .5 GVV of its electricity from solar energy in ten years, making it one of the most progressive nations on the global renewables map.

[Spike, then slump, in oil rattles Middle East](#)

CAIRO - As oil prices rollercoasted from record highs near \$150 per barrel a year ago down to \$35, many pointed fingers at traditional scapegoats OPEC and the oil sheiks long synonymous with the group.

The reasoning was that the 12-member bloc — source of more than 30 percent of the world's oil — was to blame for the spike, then doubly culpable as it struggled to engineer a rebound as prices fell during the start of the worst global recession in decades.

For the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, and its key Mideast members, however, it was a question of economic survival.

[Asian maritime boundary disputes driven by oil, gas demand](#)

A subcommittee of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee has been told that growing demand for oil and gas is one of the main drivers of increasing “friction and tension” over maritime boundaries in waters of East and Southeast Asia.

“In recent years, we have observed an increase in friction and tension over these disputes,” said US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert Scher, referring to what he called a series of “persistent territorial disputes” over maritime territories in Southeast Asia and the South China Sea.

[Petrobras production fell in June](#)

Brazilian oil giant Petrobras' production fell in June, owing to programmed outages at two platforms and the ending of production on a floating production, storage and offloading vessel.

Petrobras said that overall daily oil and gas production reached an average 2.505 million barrels of oil equivalent last month, down from 2.547 million boe in May.

[Halliburton's Tough Quarter](#)

The oilfield service sector's link to integrated energy means limited growth until oil demand improves.

[Alberta gas coming back in favour?](#)

Alberta natural gas has been out of favour for years, but Bonavista Energy Trust's \$694-million purchase of predominantly natural-gas assets in Central Alberta from EnCana Corp. on Thursday shows sentiment may be turning.

A combination of declining costs, new technologies, acceptable royalties and tightening North American supplies made the Alberta acquisition compelling even at today's depressed natural-gas prices (they closed yesterday at US\$3.67 per million British thermal units in New York) -- and very attractive if prices recover to the US\$5 to US\$6 per thousand cubic feet range, said Keith MacPhail, Bonavista chief executive.

[B.C. community fearful after new threat from purported bomber](#)

Residents near the B.C.-Alberta border are on edge after their community was mentioned in a letter that appears to be from someone connected to a series of pipeline bombings in the area.

[Brazil's Santos basin: an emerging giant](#)

Global research consultants Wood Mackenzie has identified the key Brazilian infrastructure projects ready to take shape as the country develops the subsalt hydrocarbons of the Santos basin over the next 20 years.

Some are under construction already, some are at the planning stage, but many are conceptual with uncertainties ahead. Even with potential for delays, WoodMac says it is certain that the Santos basin will turn Brazil into a global oil and gas power-house over the coming decades.

[\\$100,000 per Barrel Oil](#)

Please note that this is only an interesting thought experiment to illustrate the *huge* potential for oil's price escalation.

[A New Enforcer in Buildings, the Energy Inspector](#)

AUSTIN, Tex. — Peering behind a bathtub in a newly built house, an inspector, John Umphress, spotted a big gap in the wall insulation. “Somebody took a lunch break!” he complained to the builder, who sheepishly agreed to patch the hole.

With the fix, the house, already a model of energy efficiency, will use even less energy and save its residents money — for decades.

But that small catch would not have been made in many American towns. Mr. Umphress is a particular kind of inspector, an energy auditor, and Austin, with one of the toughest building codes in the country, requires an energy inspection before a building can be occupied.

[Asian Nations Could Outpace U.S. in Developing Clean Energy](#)

President Obama has often described his push to fund "clean" energy technology as key to America's drive for international competitiveness as well as a way to combat climate change.

"There's no longer a question about whether the jobs and the industries of the 21st century will be centered around clean, renewable energy," he said on June 25. "The only question is: Which country will create these jobs and these industries? And I want that answer to be the United States of America."

But the leaders of India, South Korea, China and Japan may have different answers. Those Asian nations are pouring money into renewable energy industries, funding research and development and setting ambitious targets for renewable energy use. These plans could outpace the programs in Obama's economic stimulus package or in the House climate bill sponsored by Reps. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.) and Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.).

[GM to make battery packs near Detroit](#)

DETROIT -- General Motors Corp. will assemble battery packs for its new rechargeable electric car at a facility south of Detroit, creating about 100 jobs, two people briefed on the plans said Friday.

The new factory off Interstate 75 in Brownstown Township, about 15 miles south of Detroit, will take batteries made by LG Chem in South Korea and assemble them into packs that will power the new Chevrolet Volt, said one of the people. Both requested anonymity.

[Lender of last resort](#)

His goals for Community Futures are lofty, as economic and social reconstruction is not an easy challenge. However, Bass feels the company is up to the task.

“Our greatest concern is to make a positive contribution to the social and economic fabric of Abbotsford,” he said.

Those contributions include anything from reducing poverty to looking for sustainable alternatives to peak oil.

Above all, the message is to bring a social side to economic growth, focusing on supporting locally sold products and providing money for start-ups and business expansions.

[Fearing for future of Earth](#)

One of the more serious invaders is not the Asian longhorned beetle or purple loosestrife, but the European earthworm.

That’s right, those cute wiggly things we encourage in our gardens are really a menace spreading across this country. Apparently the last great Ice Age wiped out all the earthworms in New England and other areas affected by the glaciers, and the ecology of the area developed without them. Then came the Pilgrims and now the ground is full of worms. We have great gardens but our forests are in danger.

Those creatures love to eat the leaf litter on the floor of forests that protect seedlings from temperature changes and browsing deer. The forests will not regenerate without the seedlings.

[Kim Stanley Robinson - Return to the Heavens, for the Sake of the Earth](#)

Does the notion of sending humans to space still make sense in the age of climate change?

[G8 outcome falls short of needs - IPCC chief](#)

PARIS (AFP) – The head of the UN's panel of climate-change experts said on Friday he was encouraged by climate pledges at last week's G8 summit but warned commitments still fell short of what was required by science.

[Mystery methane belched out by megacities](#)

The Los Angeles metropolitan area belches far more methane into its air than scientists had previously realised. If other megacities are equally profligate, urban methane

emissions may represent a surprisingly important source of this potent greenhouse gas.



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