



Drumbeat: August 30, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on August 30, 2009 - 10:33am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Rubbing salt into the wounds](#)

The UAE's demand for water, growing yearly in pace with the nation's expansion, is insatiable and insupportable. With extremely limited natural supplies, the UAE and all its mighty ambitions and achievements – from desert golf courses to the world's tallest building – are utterly dependent on water drawn from the sea, as are every man, woman and child who lives here.

When it comes to water, the UAE is living beyond its means, trapped in an unsustainable spiral. Its per-capita consumption is among the highest in the world. Its natural groundwater supplies, pumped in an uncontrolled manner for decades, are being drained 24 times faster than they can be replenished, leaving them increasingly polluted with salt water.

Farming, one of the smallest parts of the economy, consumes vast amounts of water. And waste from desalination leaves land and sea increasingly polluted.

[Walk this way - urge 'sustainable development](#)

The real estate collapse has masked the existence of a severe housing shortage in California. While developers have oversupplied single-family detached homes with backyards, buyers looking for a home within walking distance of jobs, services, good schools, parks and public transit have few options in this state. Communities that have these "sustainable development" characteristics, such as neighborhoods in San Francisco, Pasadena and San Diego, are often among the most expensive in the state. They are also few and far between compared with the vast stretches of suburban homes covering the state.

[Brazil's Lula to meet foes to new oil plan](#)

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will try on Sunday to overcome opposition by three state governors to a legislative proposal he hopes will make the country a top oil producer and help fight poverty.

The government will unveil on Monday a legal framework to develop massive new off-

shore oil deposits, which triggered euphoria and expectations of newfound wealth in Latin America's largest country when they were announced in 2007.

[Tullow Oil chief executive Aidan Heavey says the future of fuel lies in Africa](#)

African oil is what's causing the excitement. With assets in 15 African nations from Mauritania to Madagascar, Tullow now gets 60pc of its production from the continent. The rest is mostly North Sea gas, but Africa accounts for 94pc of group reserves.

Next year's start of production from the Jubilee oilfield off Ghana's coast should double Tullow's 40,000-barrels-a-day African production, and, by the third phase of the roll-out, it should have doubled again.

[Nigeria: Manufacturers Protest High Gas Price](#)

Fresh energy crisis is pummelling the industrial sector as manufacturers who use natural gas have shut down their production to protest new gas price being slammed on them by local gas companies.

More than 85 per cent of the manufacturers especially in Lagos depend on gas to fire their generators while others use it for their boilers and more than 60 per cent of gas users have reduced their production in the past one week.

[High costs fuel Mideast district cooling market](#)

JEDDAH - In a region where the temperature frequently exceeds 45 degree Celsius and air conditioning requirements consume 70 percent of the power during peak electricity demand, district cooling is emerging as the most viable cooling solution in the Middle East, Frost & Sullivan's new report titled "Analysis of the District Cooling Market in the Middle East Region" said.

[Wood to oil process could make forest thinning pay](#)

For the past decade that the U.S. Forest Service has been pressing to thin hundreds of millions of acres of woods in danger of burning up, it has had one nagging problem: how to come up with the billions of dollars to pay for it.

Young trees are too small for lumber. Transporting the bulky material to biomass power plants is too expensive. And cutting big trees to pay for thinning the small ones often runs afoul of environmental laws.

Jim Archuleta, a soil scientist on the Umpqua National Forest in southwestern Oregon,

thinks he might have the answer in a new twist on old technology called fast pyrolysis.

[Biogas firm targets rural areas, farmers](#)

As the energy crisis bites, right after fuel prices shot through the roof, some Kenyan firms have gone green and are busy developing alternative energy sources.

One such green technology firm, Pioneer Technologies has teamed up with Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology to develop biogas-based systems for cooking and cheap electricity.

[Saudi tightens security to protect oil plants](#)

KHOBAR, Saudi Arabia (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia has tightened security at oil facilities after the country's anti-terror chief escaped a suicide attack, guards at Abqaiq, the world's biggest oil processing plant, said on Sunday.

Abqaiq was the first Saudi oil target since Al Qaeda launched attacks aimed at toppling Saudi Arabia's pro-Western monarchy in 2003. The country's deputy interior minister, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, on Thursday escaped with light injuries in the first known assault on a member of the Saudi royal family.

"Thursday night we received a call to tighten security measures and car inspection at all gates," one security guard said.

[Reluctance to Spend May Be Legacy of Recession](#)

But even if her spending power is restored, Ms. Nelson says her inclination to buy has been permanently diminished. Through nine months of joblessness, she has learned to forgo the impulse buys that used to provide momentary pleasure — \$4 lattes at Starbucks, lip gloss, mints. She has found she can survive without the pedicures and chocolate martinis that once filled regular evenings at the spa. Before punishing heat and drought turned much of central Texas brown, she subsisted primarily on vegetables harvested from her plot at a community garden, where only one oasis of flowers remains.

Once intent on buying a home, Ms. Nelson now feels security in remaining a renter, steering clear of the shark-infested waters of the mortgage industry.

"I'm having to shift my dreams to accommodate the new realities," she said. "Now, I have more of a bunker mentality. If you get hit hard enough, it lasts. This impact is going to last."

[Preventing blackout](#)

On July 25, La Plata County kicked off the visioning process for the update of its Comprehensive Plan with an all-day meeting, in which about 50 residents shared views about the past and present and devised story lines for the La Plata County of 2030. Kidrow, a blog for parents in the know Katie Ogier - The Wells Group Gateway Reservations

One of the ideas that emerged was using local resources to become self-sufficient in energy. The importance of this concept is underscored in Richard Heinberg's new book, Blackout. Heinberg's earlier books include The Party's Over and Peak Everything, which document the impending occurrence of "peak oil" and its consequences for modern society. In Blackout, he extends his analysis to coal, the most abundant fossil fuel.

[The mirage of energy independence and the reality of interdependence](#)

(MENAFN - Arab News) The International Monetary Fund's executive board has urged Saudi Arabia to maintain a longer-term perspective on global oil demand. While praising Riyadh for its leadership in stabilizing oil markets by continuing to expand capacity in the face of falling prices, the IMF directors "encouraged the authorities to continue basing their capacity expansion decisions on medium to long-term (and indeed not short-term) demand conditions."

Indeed easier said than done in many respects, one can't fail underlining here, especially in the given environment.

[After 150 years, age of oil entering an efficiency phase](#)

Despite the similarities with 1859, though, the oil industry in 2009 faces challenges that make past barriers seem like mere bumps in comparison — surging energy demand from the developing world, volatile price swings that spawn both boon and bust, and demands to limit the environmental damage of fossil fuels.

“But the age of oil is not over,” Yergin says. “Over the next two to three decades, on a global basis we'll see oil demand increase, but there will be a tremendous drive for us to use it much more efficiently.”

That drive, and particularly the role that natural gas may play in it, could help keep another generation of workers in Houston's office towers and refineries employed.

[India's generation of children crippled by uranium waste](#)

Their heads are too large or too small, their limbs too short or too bent. For some, their

brains never grew, speech never came and their lives are likely to be cut short: these are the children it appears that India would rather the world did not see, the victims of a scandal with potential implications far beyond the country's borders.

[Anti-speculation push may topple oil prices](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - A debate is emerging over how curbs on energy market speculation may impact oil prices, with at least one major bank boldly expecting the new rules will trigger a 30-percent price plunge.

The outcome holds wide-ranging implications for G20 developed nations collectively spending as much as \$4.8 trillion to stimulate their economies through the worst global recession in decades.

"Regulators don't and shouldn't talk about trying to influence prices," said John Brodman, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Energy. "But there's a growing political imperative out there. An oil price rise of \$30 a barrel would offset 40 percent of the stimulus spending. That's not what these countries are looking for."

[Secret documents uncover UK's interest in Libyan oil](#)

Libya has been courted by Prince Charles, government ministers and Foreign Office mandarins on a dozen or more occasions in pursuit of lucrative oil and gas contracts.

Documents obtained by the *Observer* show ministers and senior civil servants met Shell to discuss the company's oil interests in Libya on at least 11 occasions and perhaps as many as 26 times in less than four years.

[Sinochem in bid for Gulfsands](#)

Independent oil and gas producer Gulfsands Petroleum is in takeover talks with China's state-owned Sinochem, which is offering up to £400m for the business.

[Size trumps technology as big cars dent green gains](#)

AUSTRALIA'S enduring love affair with big cars means engine technology alone will not be enough to deliver necessary cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, a government report has warned.

The report, by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, has added weight to demands for tough new measures to encourage the production of smaller, more efficient vehicles, including mandatory emissions standards.

[Energy Dept. Fails to Use Thermostats to Cut Costs](#)

WASHINGTON — The Energy Department strives to be a leader in championing energy efficiency. Its Web site lists energy-saving tips, while Secretary Steven Chu calls conservation one of the department's most important goals.

But at many of the agency's buildings, even at national laboratories where talented scientists seek technological breakthroughs to save energy, the department has failed to use one of the most effective tools available to any ordinary household: thermostats that automatically dial back the temperature when nobody is around.

[Nuclear Regulators Urge High-Tech Fire Detection](#)

WASHINGTON — Many of the hundreds of workers at the Shearon Harris nuclear plant in New Hill, N.C., are busy with high-tech tasks like calibrating equipment, monitoring radiation fields or controlling the reactor. But around the clock, there are three on duty who might have come out of another century.

They sniff for smoke.

Pacing miles each day, up and down stairs and through vast halls and narrow passages, they visit crucial locations at least once an hour to make sure fire has not broken out.

[United Kingdom Faces a Quandary Over New Nuclear or Coal Power](#)

LONDON -- The United Kingdom is nearing a crucial decision as it tries to tackle the climate crisis -- whether to make a major push into new nuclear power or to proliferate coal-fired power plants constructed so their carbon emissions are captured and safely stored.

[PHEVs and EVs: Plugging Into a Lump of Coal](#)

Since I've stirred up a hornet's nest over the last two weeks first by debunking the mythology that PHEVs and EVs will save their owners money and then by showing how PHEVs and EVs will sabotage America's drive for energy independence, I figured I might as well go for the triple-crown of harsh realities by showing readers that in the U.S., where 70% of electricity comes from burning hydrocarbons, PHEVs and EVs won't make a dent in CO₂ emissions. They'll just take distributed CO₂ emissions off the roads and centralize them in coal and gas fired power plants.

[Clash in Alabama Over Tennessee Coal Ash](#)

UNIONTOWN, Ala. — Almost every day, a train pulls into a rail yard in rural Alabama, hauling 8,500 tons of a disaster that occurred 350 miles away to a final resting place, the Arrowhead Landfill here in Perry County, which is very poor and almost 70 percent black.

To county leaders, the train's loads, which will total three million cubic yards of coal ash from a massive spill at a power plant in east Tennessee last December, are a tremendous financial windfall. A per-ton "host fee" that the landfill operators pay the county will add more than \$3 million to the county's budget of about \$4.5 million.

[Ethanol faces challenges ahead](#)

New technologies, supporting infrastructures, and greater demand will be needed to meet the country's ambitious mandate to increase biofuel use.

[Cheap wheat to help meet EU fuel demand](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - A sharp decline in wheat prices driven by a supply glut is set to lead to more of the grain being turned into motor fuel in the European Union.

[Standards for Small-Scale Wind Power](#)

The American Wind Energy Association is developing a series of standards that will measure the safety, reliability and performance of small wind turbines.

The standards, which the organization hopes to have in place by the end of the year, come amid increased interest in small-scale and rooftop wind power — typically designed for individual homes, farms and small businesses, and producing 100 kilowatts of electricity or less.

[Four Years Later, New Orleans' Green Makeover](#)

After Hurricane Katrina flattened New Orleans exactly four years ago, on Aug. 29, 2005, the city emerged as an inadvertent symbol of global warming, the first American victim of climate change. Over 200,000 homes were destroyed during the Category 5 hurricane. But in the years since, the Crescent City has quietly embraced a new and unexpected role as a laboratory for green building. Sustainable development groups that range from the international nonprofit Global Green to earth-friendly celebrities like Brad Pitt descended on New Orleans, determined not just to build the city back, but to build it back green. "It's going to come back," says Matt Petersen, the president of

Global Green USA. "But we want to build it better than it was before."

[Troubling bubbles: Methane oozes from thawing permafrost](#)

Pure methane, gas bubbling up from underwater vents, escaping into northern skies, adds to the global-warming gases accumulating in the atmosphere. And pure methane escaping in the massive amounts known to be locked in the Arctic permafrost and seabed would spell a climate catastrophe.

Is such an unlocking under way?

Researchers say air temperatures here in northwest Canada, in Siberia and elsewhere in the Arctic have risen more than 4.5 degrees Fahrenheit since 1970 — much faster than the global average. The summer thaw is reaching deeper into frozen soil, at a rate of 1.5 inches a year, and a further 13-degree temperature rise is possible this century, said the authoritative, U.N.-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC.

[India, China to study climate change](#)

New Delhi: India and China will jointly conduct research on the impact of climate change on the glaciers in the Himalayan and Tibetan regions, Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh said here yesterday.

[UN meeting: help nations adapt to global warming](#)

GENEVA — As nations negotiate tough decisions on cutting greenhouse gases, the United Nations is holding a separate conference on coping with more floods, droughts and other effects of climate change already assured.

[Bjorn Lomborg: Technology Can Fight Global Warming](#)

We have precious little to show for nearly 20 years of efforts to prevent global warming. Promises in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 to cut carbon emissions went unfulfilled. Stronger pledges in Kyoto five years later failed to keep emissions in check. The only possible lesson is that agreements to reduce carbon emissions are costly, politically arduous and ultimately ineffective.

But this is a lesson many are hell-bent on ignoring, as politicians plan to gather again — this time in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December—to negotiate a new carbon-emissions treaty. Even if they manage to bridge their differences and sign a deal, there is a strong likelihood that tomorrow's politicians will fail to deliver.

[Our ship is sinking: we must act now](#)

The cause of our weather shifts does not matter. The millions who will be affected are the priority.

[A High Cost to Deal With Climate Shift](#)

NEW YORK — The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has described the notion of “adaptation” as those initiatives designed “to reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects.”

The implication, of course, is that regardless of what nations, businesses or individuals do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the planet is going to warm up. Everything from coastal geography and weather patterns to the global tableau of arable land, such that we’ve come to know and rely on them, will be — indeed, already are — in flux, and we had best start planning.



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