



Drumbeat: March 23, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on March 23, 2010 - 9:12am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Energy in Saudi Arabia: A Kingdom Running on Empty?](#)

Saudi Arabia has the world's largest crude reserves, and the kingdom's natural gas reserves are the fourth largest in the world at 267 trillion cubic feet. This should provide the country with a plentiful supply of fuel for its power stations, water desalination plants and petrochemicals facilities. So why, Saudi citizens might well wonder, are power generation plants frequently forced to shut down? Last summer, in fact, the state-owned power utility, Saudi Electricity Company (SEC), was forced to withhold electricity supplies for three-hour periods to industrial users south of Jeddah and elsewhere. The reality, experts say, is that Saudi authorities are struggling to keep up with increasing demand and strained capacity.

Last year, the country's installed electricity capacity was 39,242 megawatts (MW), leaving a reserve margin of around 3%, compared to a global average of at least 10%. And because electricity generation grew only 5.7% in 2008, the country's grid could not maintain supplies through the peak summer months, when air-conditioning demand tips the energy supply balance into the red.

Oil is partly to blame for Saudi's supply/demand woes. "The very fact that Saudi Arabia dominates the world's oil markets mitigates its ability to take advantage of its gas endowment," says Justin Dargin, a research fellow at Harvard University's Dubai Initiative (a joint venture between the Dubai School of Government and the John F. Kennedy School of Government). Saudis "have always tended to view gas as a useful by-product."

on, maintains that Russia in 10-15 years will face serious trouble in its Arctic territories because of the melting permafrost.

Thousands of kilometers of pipelines, railway, roads and a big number of towns will be in danger following the melting, and the development will require the introduction of new construction regulations, Averyanov says. He believes that as much as 25 percent of all houses in towns and cities like Tiksi, Yakutsk and Vorkuta already in 10-15 years will become useless because of the unstable ground conditions.

The permafrost covers two thirds of Russian land territories and the changing climate could destabilize all building and engineering facilities in the area.

[Russia and the Arctic: Parachuting In](#)

Although there are a number of reasons why Moscow might want to assert its legal claim over areas of 'no man's land' - or rather 'noman's sea' - in the Arctic Ocean, one of the most important concerns the region's natural resources. In recent years there has been a great deal of speculation about supposedly huge quantities of oil and natural gas; one 2008 survey 'guestimated' that it holds as much as thirteen percent of the world's undiscovered oil and thirty percent of its undiscovered natural gas. Although these figures are highly speculative, Russia knows that they might potentially even understate what really lies there: huge areas of the East Siberian, Chuckhi and Barents Sea, for example, have not even been subject to proper geological assessment.

Although the Arctic does have some attractive 'niche basins' where deposits are accessible and could be tapped into with existing infrastructure, exploiting resources elsewhere would not be commercially viable. This is partly because such reserves are likely to be in deep waters remote from potential markets, but also because the harsh climate would make extraction difficult and dangerous. This is why, for example, the Shtokman field - Russia's massive natural gas complex in the Barents Sea - has been subject to so many cost overruns and delays since it was first discovered in 1988.

Over the coming decades it seems quite possible that the climatic conditions in parts of the High North will ameliorate, while technological progress will open up these remote areas for proper exploitation in the same way that energy companies are now drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, the Caspian Sea and elsewhere at depths that were once considered unthinkable.

[Petrobras to start Tupi pilot oil output in Oct.](#)

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) - Brazil's state-run oil company Petrobras said on Tuesday it would move up the start of a pilot production run at its 5-8 billion barrel Tupi subsalt field to October, from December originally.

[New oil investments need \\$60-\\$70 oil price-BP head](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - If oil prices fall below \$60 to \$70 a barrel for an extended period of time, it will hurt investments in developing new energy supplies, BP Chief Executive Tony Hayward said on Tuesday.

[Oilfield Company Failed to Report Fracking Violations to EPA - Documents](#)

One of the world's largest oilfield services companies continued to tell U.S. EPA it was complying with an agreement barring the injection of diesel fuel near drinking-water aquifers, documents show, after admitting to Congress that it had violated the pact.

[Venezuelan Grid to Remain 'Vulnerable,' Eurasia Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Venezuela's electricity grid will remain "vulnerable" into 2011 as strained government finances delay the installation of generators and the maintenance of existing transmission lines, Eurasia Group said.

[Energy Ministry Reduces 2015 Power Forecast](#)

The Energy Ministry is rewriting its GOELRO-2 power plan, under which 20 percent to 25 percent less capacity will be built by 2015 than had been expected when the document was created four years ago.

The difference, of 61 to 81 gigawatts, is equivalent to three times RusHydro's capacity or six times that of Mosenergo.

[Huaneng Power Says Rising Capacity Puts Pressure on Utilization](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Huaneng Power International Inc., a unit of China's biggest electricity producer, said generating capacity in the country "keeps increasing significantly," putting pressure on the company's power utilization.

[Smart Water Meters Take Hold in California](#)

Smart water meters are taking off in California, according to a forthcoming report from the California Energy Commission. More than half of the state's water utilities have some smart meters in their service areas, according to the report, "Smart Meters and California Water Agencies: Overview and Status."

Lon W. House, the report's author, said in an interview that the number was likely to be "significantly" higher now because the report's data was now over a year old.

[Congress Should Stand By Cap-And-Trade, Hayward Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- U.S. lawmakers drafting legislation to curb greenhouse-gas emissions shouldn't abandon a cap-and-trade program as the foundation of the bill, BP Plc Chief Executive Officer Tony Hayward said.

"I profoundly believe that a cap-and-trade mechanism is the only way we will solve the emissions issue," Hayward said today in a speech at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington.

[Energy in Saudi Arabia: A Kingdom Running on Empty?](#)

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[Energy Execs Bullish on Oil, See Sluggish Natural Gas Market](#)

Energy companies and oil service firms are becoming confident that oil prices will remain above \$75 a barrel driven by demand in emerging markets, but they say that prices for natural gas could remain depressed amid a production glut.

Sustained higher oil prices, which settled at \$81.25 a barrel in New York on Monday, are encouraging exploration and production companies to increase spending. The trend is evident even in capital-intensive projects such as the deepwater of the Gulf of Mexico and Canadian oil sands, which saw cuts the last two years as the economic crisis roared.

[The dragon and the elephant in a contest for oil](#)

The elephant appears to be trailing the dragon through the jungles of the oil world.

The state-owned Indian Oil Corporation is in talks to acquire Gulfsands Petroleum, a UK company active in Syria. It was only last August that Sinochem, China's fourth-largest oil company, bought Emerald Energy, Gulfsands's partner in Syria.

Is this a battle India can win? Is it a battle India should even be fighting?

[Yemen's Big Concern](#)

In 2002, Yemen's oil production peaked at more than 450 000 barrels of oil per day. A few years later, in 2006, Yemen produced almost 390 000 barrels of oil per day (140 million barrels annually). Of this oil, 55 million barrels (40% of the production) were used by Yemen itself, and the rest – 85 million barrels – was exported.

Two years later, in 2008, Yemen produced only 305 000 barrels of oil per day (110 million barrels annually), and during the first 10 months of the year almost 40 million barrels were exported. If we assume that the country managed to export 50 million barrels in total throughout the year (which is doubtful, since oil production was declining), domestic consumption has risen from 55 million barrels to 60 million barrels (55% of the production) in two years. This is in line with figures indicating that domestic consumption rose by another 2.5 million barrels from 2008 to 2009.

[Chavez battered by energy crisis](#)

CARACAS, Venezuela (UPI) -- With no substantial rain in sight, the electricity crisis hitting Venezuela is creating an opening for political opposition to President Hugo Chavez.

[El Niño in Venezuela: Hugo Chávez's "Katrina" Moment?](#)

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has been in power for more than ten years, during which time he has deflected numerous electoral challenges, a recall effort, a coup d'état and even an oil lock out. A politically adroit statesman, he has demonstrated enormous staying power throughout all these political crises.

Yet, Chávez's luck may have finally run out: a devastating El Niño-linked drought has recently ravaged Venezuela and the government has been forced to undertake conservation measures for water and electricity. Hardly amused, some are holding Chávez responsible for the energy crunch and the drought could exact a heavy toll on the Venezuelan president in September's legislative elections.

What is causing Venezuela's energy crisis?

[Venezuela cuts power to 'heavy' electricity users](#)

Dozens of hotels, restaurants, office buildings and other businesses went dark Monday after failing to meet a government target of reducing electricity usage by 20 percent amid a deepening energy crisis.

Caracas' state electrical utility announced that it shut off supply to 42 businesses for 24 hours to punish users that have not cut usage enough as required under government measures adopted last month.

Hotels warned guests to leave ahead of time, and restaurants were deserted and dark. Some business owners said they have done their best to conserve, and called the daylong blackout abusive.

[Balochistan: Its Importance For The Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline](#)

Balochistan, the size of Texas and that accounts for 44 per cent of Pakistan and 16 per cent of Iran's landmass, is a strategically important area.

By virtue of its energy resources and its location, it is key to the energy supply to South Asia, including Pakistan. The country's mounting energy crisis and the growing demand for energy security in the region have magnified Balochistan's economic and strategic importance.

[Pakistan: Energy crisis](#)

With the summer fast approaching in many parts of the country, attention is once again turning to the country's energy deficit and the need for more power in the years ahead. But the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan has expressed surprise that an offer to supply over 1,000 megawatts of electricity from Iran has not been fast-tracked. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in December 2008 between the two countries, however Ambassador Mash'allah Shakeri has complained that no one in Pakistan has tried to move the issue forward.

[Tanzania: Power rationing spells doom or economy, analysts warn](#)

The latest spate of rolling power blackouts in the country will have far-reaching consequences on the economy and reverse gains already made in boosting GDP growth and taming inflation to single-digit levels, a university don has warned.

[Indonesia: Govt expects to remove electricity subsidy by 2014](#)

The government expects to remove the electricity subsidy completely by as early as 2014 so that it will have more funds available to fight poverty and improve healthcare directly for the poor, a minister has said..

"We hope we can fully implement the economic tariffs for electricity by between 2014 and 2015," Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Darwin Zahedy Saleh said in Jakarta on Monday.

[Tajikistan looks to solve energy crisis with huge dam](#)

It is the Tajik government's answer to decades of energy shortages.

Rogun hydropower plant sits 110km (68 miles) east of the capital, Dushanbe, on the river Vaksh. When it is finished, the planned 335m (1,100ft) dam will be the tallest in the world.

For a mountainous country with thousands of glaciers but no hydrocarbons, harnessing the power of water is the obvious solution.

[Qatar on the Cusp](#)

By bringing its vast gas reserves to the world, and turning gas into liquid oil, the tiny emirate is making some investors forget all about Dubai.

[Shell Cuts Geelong Refinery Jobs to Stay Competitive](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Europe's second-largest oil company, will conduct an "organizational restructure" at its Geelong refinery in Australia's Victoria state that will result in the loss of 20 jobs.

[2 kidnapped oil workers found dead in Nigeria](#)

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) -- A trade unionist says two Nigerian oil workers have been found dead in the oil-rich Niger Delta region after being kidnapped 10 days ago.

A Nigerian Oil Workers Union official says the bodies were found Tuesday in the bush off the road to Sapele town, about 420 kilometers (261 miles) southwest of the capital, Abuja.

[Is there Panic at the EIA?](#)

Since the early 1980s, the EIA has been reporting on U.S. oil inventories. Lately, the EIA has come under fire over its weekly oil reports.

Within the last three years, several discrepancies were found in the amount of oil reported in storage. Let's take a closer look at one of those instances...

[Nonresidential electricity market to be opened to some competition](#)

If you own a business or run a government agency, soon you won't have to buy your electricity from San Diego Gas & Electric.

Beginning April 16, nonresidential customers who now get their power from SDG&E will be able to buy electricity from one of a dozen other companies. The idea, called direct access, allows them to lock in prices or get a greater percentage of their power from the sun, the wind or underground heat.

[Five myths about electric cars](#)

Despite how many times they're told differently, some Americans persist in their belief that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Sorry, nope. And almost as enduring are the myths about the forthcoming electric vehicles. So let me use my bully pulpit here to dispel some of the more common rumors, half-truths and innuendos.

[Book Review: Whole Earth Discipline](#)

Whole Earth Discipline challenges the greens on four more holy cows: population, urbanisation, nuclear power and Genetically Engineered crops, and in reading this compelling and fascinating book I have had to do some serious re-thinking around these issues myself.

[Our Obsession With Stuff Is Trashing the Planet, Our Communities and Our Health](#)

A new book questioning our consumerism says we spend more on shoes and jewelry than higher education; more on ocean cruises than providing drinking water for all.

[Entergy wants to keep nuclear option in Louisiana](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Entergy Corp's Louisiana power companies filed with Louisiana utility regulators last week to continue early development activities for possible construction of a nuclear power plant at the River Bend site.

[Platts: China's Oil Demand Tops Record High in February](#)

China's apparent* oil demand in February jumped 16.6% from a year ago to a historic high of around 8.5 million barrels per day (b/d) or about 33.28 million tonnes, according to a Platts analysis of official data just released.

February marked the sixth straight month the world's second largest oil consumer posted double-digit annual growth in oil demand.

..."Chinese refineries are running full steam, but the country, which also boosted its refining capacity through 2009, appears to be producing far more fuel than what the domestic market is absorbing," said Vandana Hari, Asia news director at Platts. The surplus has to either go into storage or show up as export barrels, she explained.

"News that state giant Sinopec began subsidizing exports by its refineries in February signals an urgency to get rid of stocks, especially if the company didn't want to reduce crude processing rates," said Hari. "It appears that going forward, we could see a continuing strong climb in China's crude imports and a waning appetite for product imports," Hari added.

A revised domestic oil products pricing mechanism adopted by the Chinese government at the beginning of 2009 encourages higher processing rates because it not only guarantees an estimated 5% margin for the refiners, but also factors in crude processing costs.

[Why \\$3 gas won't be a problem](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- The average nationwide price of a gallon of gas is creeping close to \$3 a gallon, bringing back bad memories from the summer of 2008. If gas tops the \$3 mark, will that kill the economic recovery? Or will consumers just shrug their shoulders and keep driving and spending?

[European Fuel Oil Supply to Asia May Rise 13 Percent](#)

(Bloomberg) -- European fuel oil shipments to Asia may increase 13 percent next month to as much as 4.5 million metric tons, even as rising freight rates pared profits for arbitrage between the two regions.

Fuel oil, used to power ships or burnt to generate electricity, is being shipped to Singapore, the world's largest bunkering port, on falling demand in Europe and higher prices in Asia, according to a Bloomberg News survey of four traders involved in West-to-East supply.

[Iraq's Divided Vote May Deepen Kirkuk Dispute](#)

KIRKUK, Iraq (Reuters) - A dispute between Kurds and Arabs over Iraq's oil producing city of Kirkuk may deepen after a strong election challenge by Iyad Allawi's Arab nationalist Iraqiya to the Kurdish ruling bloc.

Preliminary results from the March 7 parliamentary election show strong Sunni Arab and Turkmen support has pushed the secularist Iraqiya list led by Shi'ite former Prime

Minister Iyad Allawi slightly ahead of the powerful Kurdish alliance.

[China says no to Pakistan link](#)

A senior Chinese government official has revealed that the country has backed away from a plan to install a major gas pipeline from Pakistan to China, thus dealing an indirect blow to a recently-approved project to install a key trunkline from Iran to Pakistan.

[Abu Dhabi's Takreer Runs Ruwais Refinery Below Capacity](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Abu Dhabi Oil Refinery Co. is running one of its two plants below capacity as the state-run company known as Takreer awaits supplies from offshore fields, an official said.

[Qatar can add 5-6 mln T LNG capacity with revamp](#)

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Qatar can raise its liquefied natural gas (LNG) capacity by 5-6 million tonnes a year by revamping existing facilities, Energy Minister Abdullah al-Attiyah said on Tuesday.

"We have the trains. We have the pipes we have the tankers. We have everything. So it is more of a flexibility with a small investment," he told reporters in New Delhi.

[Chinese Oil Firms Cash in on Overseas Alliances](#)

China's oil companies are increasingly finding the value of partnering with foreign firms in their push abroad, especially in areas where they have run into trouble trying to go it alone.

The most recent example of the strategy's success came Monday, when Australian energy company Arrow Energy Ltd. said it agreed to a \$3.15 billion offer from Royal Dutch Shell PLC and PetroChina Co. The deal, if approved by regulators, would give PetroChina access to supplies of coal seam gas to feed China's growing hunger for the fuel as well as exposure to a technology of tapping gas trapped in coal that could increase China's own domestic natural-gas supplies.

[Shell, PetroChina set gas exploration deal](#)

Royal Dutch Shell PLC said Tuesday it had agreed to explore for natural gas with China

National Petroleum Corp. in the southwestern province of Sichuan, the second deal between the companies announced this week.

[Shell Teams Up With Chinese Companies on Gas Deals](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Europe's second-largest oil producer, is working with Chinese companies globally as it expands the share of natural gas in its portfolio, Chief Executive Officer Peter Voser said.

Shell's joint bid with PetroChina Co. for Brisbane-based Arrow Energy Ltd.'s Australian business is one example of such cooperation, Voser said at a media briefing in Beijing today.

[Shell Shifts Balance Toward Gas With Arrow Takeover](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Royal Dutch Shell Plc moved a step closer to shifting the balance of its production in favor of natural gas over oil following a joint A\$3.5 billion (\$3.2 billion) acquisition of Arrow Energy Ltd.

The deal with PetroChina Co. will give Shell access to Arrow Energy's holdings of coal-seam gas reserves, while conventional supplies are either declining or off limits in other parts of the world. Chief Executive Officer Peter Voser has described Australia as a "key growth" region for Shell.

[Anadarko's discoveries create challenges](#)

Anadarko Petroleum's unprecedented exploration success has left the US oil and gas producer with the challenge of developing a string of big projects on time and on budget. The company announced nine deepwater discoveries in 2009 - big discoveries in key areas, such as the US Gulf of Mexico, Brazil and along the newly found oil coast stretching from Ghana to Sierra Leone.

...At the least, the majors will seek partnerships with Anadarko to help develop these projects - a common way to spread financial, operational and political risk. But with the opportunities found by Anadarko increasingly hard to come by in a world of peak oil and resource nationalism, analysts say they position the company as a potential takeover candidate.

[Occidental Tapping Phibro Trading Profit to Fuel Crude Search](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Occidental Petroleum Corp., which pumps enough crude to fill a supertanker every 97 hours, is using profit from Andrew J. Hall's Phibro LLC energy-

trading unit to fund oil exploration.

[Cairn Shares Rise on Greenland Plan, India Oil Output](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Cairn Energy Plc jumped to a record in London trading after announcing the start of oil drilling in Greenland and forecasting higher output at its Rajasthan field, India's biggest onshore oil deposit.

[Enel Said to Seek 8 Billion Euros of Loans to Refinance Debt](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Enel SpA, Italy's biggest utility, is seeking to raise 8 billion euros (\$10.8 billion) of five-year loans to refinance debt, according to three people familiar with the matter.

Enel plans to use the proceeds of the revolving credit to replace a 5 billion-euro facility due in November, said the people, who declined to be identified because the information is private.

[British Gas staff vote for strike](#)

Staff at British Gas have voted to strike after alleged bullying by management, and over changes to staff terms and conditions.

The GMB trade union said staff would take industrial action over what it described as "macho management".

[Politics and Peak Energy](#)

Economic success, growth, and an affluent (happy) consumer lifestyle directly depend on an abundance of inexpensive energy. Conversely, the quantity and type of energy consumed can have a very adverse effect on the surrounding environment and world ecological balance. It then follows that politics, the subject of governing civilized societies, is also directly dependent on the common denominator of energy, just at a time that we are facing the imminent and terminal decline of our prime energy source, oil, and ultimately all finite fossil fuels.

Yet, the advocates of different positions, for instance, climate change (man made or not), or economic development and stimulus proposals based on continued growth, do not factor in the difficult, if not impossible, transition and immense challenges facing us as we enter the second half and decline of the short, 200-year fossil energy age. Without energy to make things happen, nothing grows, moves to a new place, or expands. Bodies wither and die, civilizations contract and collapse. Yet there are leaders and experts who would lead us to believe otherwise; that finite does not mean what it says. Oil supplies

about 40% of our total energy and fuels 90% of our transportation. In addition, we have come to depend on thousands of petroleum-based products from lubricants to plastics. There may be plenty left but it's getting harder to find and steadily more expensive in terms of input energy and wealth required for extraction from remaining unconventional sources.

[Peak oil? Global warming? No, it's "Boomsday!" ... Population Explosion Means Balancing Budget Could Force 41% Cut in Social Security & Medicare Soon](#)

Population growth. Yes, population is the core problem that, unless confronted and dealt with, will render *all* solutions to *all* other problems irrelevant delaying tactics to the inevitable. Population is the one variable in an economic equation that impacts, aggravates, irritates and accelerates all other problems.

[Newcastle Coal Exports Fall 24%; Ship Queue Shortens](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Coal shipments from Australia's Newcastle port, the world's biggest export harbor for the fuel used in power stations, fell 24 percent last week while the number of vessels waiting to load declined.

[Valero CEO says EPA rules will freeze investment](#)

PHOENIX, Az. (Reuters) - The U.S. refining industry will freeze investment in anything beyond maintaining operations if the Environmental Protection Agency moves to regulate carbon pollution, the chief executive of Valero Energy Corp said.

Bill Klesse, also chairman of the National Petrochemical and Refiners Association, said late Sunday at the industry trade group's annual meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, that such regulation would increase costs for an industry already struggling with low margins and sluggish demand amid a slow economic recovery.

[Is UCG The Next CSM?](#)

One might be forgiven for assuming the coal seam methane (CSM) industry suddenly sprung up in the world about two years ago, beginning with BG's failed attempt to acquire Origin Energy ((ORG)) and most recently evident as Royal Dutch Shell and PetroChina attempt to take over Arrow Energy ((AOE)). In each case, and all cases in between, the holy grail is CSM assets sufficient for conversion to liquid natural gas (LNG) for the purpose of export to Asia. But the reality is the BG bid was simply a wake-up call to the investment market. CSM has been recognised as a source of natural gas for a long time.

[Lack of policy hurts refinancing](#)

A KEY adviser to the federal government on the impact of cutting carbon emissions says unclear energy policy is threatening \$9 billion in debt that power stations must refinance in the next five years.

Richard Wagner, the head of the investment banking at Morgan Stanley, which last year wrote a confidential report on the proposed scheme's effect on coal-fired generators, said yesterday that uncertain carbon policy would pose a "significant challenge" to heavily geared generators seeking to refinance.

[Colorado Increases Renewables Requirements](#)

In a bid to propel his state to the forefront of the new energy economy, Colorado's governor is expected to sign one of the most aggressive renewable energy requirements in the country on Monday afternoon.

The new law requires 30 percent of large utilities' electricity to come from renewables by 2020. The previous requirement was 20 percent by 2020.

[Activists call for Laos dam to suspend operations](#)

HANOI — The largest hydroelectric project in Laos, which began selling power to Thailand last week, should suspend operations until it has fulfilled its obligations to local people, activists said Tuesday.

[Executive Shakeup at Nanosolar](#)

Nanosolar, a prominent solar start-up in Silicon Valley, said on Monday that it had replaced its co-founder and chief executive, Martin Roscheisen, with Geoff Tate, a veteran of the chip industry.

[China to Build 28 More Nuclear Power Reactors by 2020](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China, the world's second-biggest energy user, approved the construction of 28 more nuclear power reactors under a revised target for 2020 to meet rising demand for clean energy and accelerate development of the industry.

Each of the one-gigawatt reactors will cost as much as 14 billion yuan (\$2.1 billion), Mu Zhanying, general manager of the state-run China Nuclear Engineering Group, said in an interview in Beijing today. One gigawatt is enough to power 800,000 average U.S. homes.

[Toshiba, Bill Gates's TerraPower May Develop Reactor](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Toshiba Corp. and Bill Gates- controlled TerraPower of the U.S. may jointly develop a small- sized nuclear generator to tap rising demand.

Toshiba and TerraPower signed a non-disclosure agreement in November to exchange information on the design and engineering know-how, a Toshiba spokesman, Keisuke Ohmori, said by telephone in Tokyo today.

[Chevron Testing Solar Technologies](#)

The oil giant Chevron has transformed an old refinery site in California into a test bed for seven advanced photovoltaic solar technologies, which the company is evaluating for use at its facilities worldwide.

On Monday, Chevron is unveiling 7,700 solar panels installed on 18 acres in Bakersfield, the capital of California's oil patch. Called Project Brightfield, the plant will generate 740 kilowatts of electricity to power nearby oil operations.

Any excess electricity will be fed to the power grid.

[France to Scrap Carbon Tax, Wants an EU-Wide Levy, Fillon Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- French President Nicolas Sarkozy is scrapping a planned tax on carbon emissions, three days after the ruling party was defeated in local elections.

Prime Minister Francois Fillon told members of parliament of the Union for a Popular Movement that any carbon tax should be imposed throughout the European Union to be effective.

[Fossil Fuel Interests Paid for Danish Study Critical of Wind Power. Does It Matter?](#)

A widely circulated report published last fall by the Center for Political Studies, or Cepos, a Danish research group, concluded that the country's wind energy figures were incorrect.

While it generally recognized the oft-cited statistic that Denmark gets roughly 20 percent of its electricity from wind power, the report argued that only an average of around 10 percent of the country's electricity needs were actually met by wind power over the last five years.

[U.S. Bolsters Chemical Restrictions for Water](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency announced on Monday that it would overhaul drinking water regulations so that officials could police dozens of contaminants simultaneously and tighten rules on the chemicals used by industries.

[Andrew McKillop: Low hope for low carbon](#)

Overcapacity of wind power and solar electric power manufacturing capacities is now widespread in many countries, even in China and India, as the "low hanging fruit" of the best sites, the biggest subsidies, the largest public support and acclaim is used up -- and oil prices although rising are still far behind the peak attained in 2008. As the economic rationale declines, huge new green energy ventures shift toward ego-trips for politicians, and become purely prestige. Chinese vice minister for Industry and IT, Miao Wei, described massive wind farms in China as essentially "vanity projects," March 11, 2010 in part due to probable rapid wear and tear of turbines increasingly located in hostile locations, such as China's dusty deserts, and increasingly in deepwater offshore wind-farms ever further from land.

[When the Lights Go Out Across the World](#)

SYDNEY—If the world's public is suffering from Climate Change "fatigue"—given the recent "climategate" scandals and disappointing results from Copenhagen—it has not hurt interest in Earth Hour, rather it has invigorated it, says Earth Hour Executive Director Andy Ridley.

[Clean-Technologies Investment Should More Than Double, EU Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Investment in cleaner technologies in the European Union should more than double to 8 billion euros (\$10.8 billion) a year for the bloc to meet its carbon-reduction targets and boost energy security, the EU energy chief said.

Spending should increase from the current annual goal of 3 billion euros and focus on projects such as solar- and wind- energy plants as well as carbon capture and storage, Energy Commissioner Guenther Oettinger said.

[CO2 Market Rift Over Hungary May Shrink Trading, Investors Say](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The United Nations carbon market, the world's second largest, is at risk of shrinking until regulators close a loophole that allowed Hungary to sell credits that aren't valid in Europe.

The European Commission couldn't stop ministers in Budapest from unloading UN emissions offsets -- surrendered once under Europe's cap-and-trade system -- to traders planning to resell somewhere else, according to the International Emissions Trading Association. Some of the credits ended up back in Europe, bringing spot trading of UN credits to a standstill last week.

[DOE, USDA, and NSF Launch Joint Climate Change Prediction Research Program](#)

The U.S. Departments of Energy and Agriculture and the National Science Foundation (NSF) announced the launch of a joint research program to produce high-resolution models for predicting climate change and its resulting impacts. Called Decadal and Regional Climate Prediction Using Earth System Models (EaSM), the program is designed to generate models that -- significantly more powerful than existing models -- can help decision-makers develop adaptation strategies addressing climate change. These models will be developed through a joint, interagency solicitation for proposals.

[Obama's healthcare victory clears path for climate change bill](#)

The chances of US climate change legislation passing this year received a major boost after President Obama secured victory in his historic battle to pass healthcare reforms late last night.

The successful House vote on the legislation following over a year of intense and fraught negotiations will clear a path for the administration to turn to its next large piece of administrative business: climate change.

[Iceland's eruptions could have global consequences](#)

Like earthquakes, predicting the timing of volcanic eruptions is an imprecise science. An eruption at the Katla volcano could be disastrous, however — both for Iceland and other nations.

Iceland's Laki volcano erupted in 1783, freeing gases that turned into smog. The smog floated across the Jet Stream, changing weather patterns. Many died from gas poisoning in the British Isles. Crop production fell in western Europe. Famine spread. Some even linked the eruption, which helped fuel famine, to the French Revolution. Painters in the 18th century illustrated fiery sunsets in their works.

The winter of 1784 was also one of the longest and coldest on record in North America. New England reported a record stretch of below-zero temperatures and New Jersey reported record snow accumulation. The Mississippi River also reportedly froze in New Orleans.

[Environmental Refugees and Global Warming](#)

ScienceDaily — Climate change and environmental degradation are likely to trigger increased migration in Sub-Saharan Africa with potentially devastating effects on the hundreds of millions of especially poor people, according to a paper in the *International Journal of Global Warming*.

Environmental changes are especially pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), explain Ulrike Grote of the Institute for Environmental Economics and World Trade, at the Leibniz University of Hannover, and Koko Warner of the United Nations University Institute of Environmental and Human Change in Bonn, Germany. Today, degradation is a serious problem for 32 countries in Africa, and a third of a billion people already face water scarcity.

[World Has Underestimated Climate-Change Effects, Expert Argues](#)

ScienceDaily — The world's policymakers have underestimated the potential dangerous impacts that man-made climate change will have on society, said Charles H. Greene, Cornell professor of earth and atmospheric sciences.

..."Even if all man-made greenhouse gas emissions were stopped tomorrow and carbon-dioxide levels stabilized at today's concentration, by the end of this century the global average temperature would increase by about 4.3 degrees Fahrenheit, or about 2.4 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels, which is significantly above the level which scientists and policymakers agree is a threshold for dangerous climate change," Greene said.

[Five feet of seawater to flood Florida's coastline over the next 100 years, scientists warn](#)

Over the next 100 years, rising global temperatures are expected to cause seas to rise five feet in the vicinity of Florida, swamping the state's coastlines, pushing salt into underground wells and potentially flooding the Everglades with seawater, a group of top Arctic scientists warned.

Compare that to the average sea level rise worldwide over the past 100 years: just under 8 inches. The warning came at the end of the State of the Arctic Conference in Miami last week, where 450 scientists from 17 countries gathered to discuss climate change and anticipate its effects.

[Has Global Warming Slowed?](#)

Global warming has neither stopped nor slowed in the past decade, according to a draft

analysis of temperature data by NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

The analysis, led by Goddard director Jim Hansen, attempts to debunk popular belief that the planet is cooling. It finds that global temperatures over the past decade have "continued to rise rapidly," despite large year-to-year fluctuations associated with the tropical El Niño-La Niña cycles.



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