



Drumbeat: March 25, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on March 25, 2010 - 9:08am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Saudi may shelve Ras Tanura refinery plan - sources](#)

KHOBAR (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia may shelve for years plans for a 400,000 barrels per day refinery expansion at Ras Tanura, industry sources said on Thursday.

The kingdom put the \$8 billion project on hold last year, one of several schemes held up while the world's top oil producer aimed to take advantage of the economic slowdown to drive down the cost of new projects.

But while state oil firm Saudi Aramco and partners have since proceeded with other new refinery plans, expansion of Ras Tanura stayed on hold and preliminary design work has slowed, the sources said.

pumped nearly two-thirds of Mexican oil output.

Declining oil output was one of the main factors behind the decision of two bond rating agencies to downgrade Mexico's sovereign debt last year.

[Energy: Progress frozen](#)

Last April, far above the Arctic Circle, on a peninsula so remote that locals call the mainland "earth", Vitaly Arefyev watched workers drill through the tundra. Their efforts were part of a drive by Gazprom, Russia's state-controlled energy giant, to develop a gas field large enough to supply Europe's needs for decades to come.

"Gazprom is ready to start producing as soon as Europe is ready," Mr Arefyev, who had run the vast Bovanenkovo gas field since 1992, proclaimed at the time. "The question is whether the world is ready for us."

Less than a year on, it seems the world is ready to wait. Many of the workers building Bovanenkovo back then have since been transferred; work is still going on but much of the field lies in limbo, a symbol of a shift in global gas markets that has transformed a looming shortage into a glut.

[Ukraine's Premier Wants 'Clean Slate'](#)

Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, seeking to revise a gas contract with Russia, called for the two sides to forget the legacy of Ukraine's previous government during talks Thursday with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

“Perhaps, we must forget what happened between our countries over the past five years, turn the page and start our relations from a clean slate,” Azarov said in his opening remarks.

[Venezuela Power-Plant Diesel Use Rises to 7-Year High](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Diesel use by Venezuelan power plants last month rose to the highest in at least seven years as a drought reduced hydroelectric generation and natural-gas shipments from Colombia declined.

Diesel consumption rose 13 percent from a year earlier to 59,000 barrels a day, and fuel oil use climbed 47 percent to 57,000 barrels, according to monthly figures posted today on the Web site of the National Administration Center, which runs the country's power grid.

Venezuela is seeking to diversify its energy sources away from hydropower, which provided 66 percent of its electricity in February. The nation is installing gas-powered generators at the Siderurgica del Orinoco steel mill as part of a plan to bring at least 4,000 megawatts of new capacity online this year.

[Copel May Sell Bonds to Fund Acquisitions, CEO Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Cia. Paranaense de Energia-Copel, the largest electricity distributor in Brazil's southern region, may sell reais-denominated bonds in the local market to finance acquisitions in Parana or neighboring states, Chief Executive Officer Rubens Ghilardi said.

Copel “has a huge capacity to raise funds in the market,” Ghilardi said in a phone interview from Curitiba. “To buy an asset, we would probably sell debentures.” He declined to say when the company may sell bonds.

[Critics Seek to Halt Ethiopian Hydro Project](#)

Several environmental and human rights groups have joined forces in crafting a petition decrying Ethiopia's Gibe III hydroelectric dam project, which they say has the potential to destroy the livelihoods of 500,000 people in Ethiopia and Kenya.

[Austin Aiming for a Grid Makeover](#)

The city of Austin, Tex., today presented a wide-ranging list of recommendations for remaking its electricity system, including more energy efficiency measures and a change to the business model of the local utility.

The effort, known as the Pecan Street Project, goes beyond the concept of smart-grids and could serve as a national model, its backers say.

[Interview with George Penfold: Thinking about the future of Kootenay Boundary](#)

RT: It's pretty insane to think that you can hope for 5% growth per year forever because a hundred years down the road, you have no environment left. It seems as though some sort of shift in people's thinking has to be coming down the line. It was interesting when you spoke about Peak Oil and climate change in your report.

GP: It would be interesting to start looking at ourselves and our lack of population growth as being ahead of the game in some respects [laughs]. We're where the rest of the world may have to get to at some point over the next fifty years. So how can we get the most out of our situation? I talked about Peak Oil in the report in some ways to be challenging. We need to start having those conversations. I'm not advocating that no growth is a position we have to adopt, but I think we have to consider it because it's pretty reflective of what our experience is. Changing that experience to something different in the future may be possible but we can't assume that because we'd like to have 1% annual population growth we're going to get it. The evidence says we won't.

[Death of coral reefs could devastate nations](#)

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Coral reefs are dying, and scientists and governments around the world are contemplating what will happen if they disappear altogether.

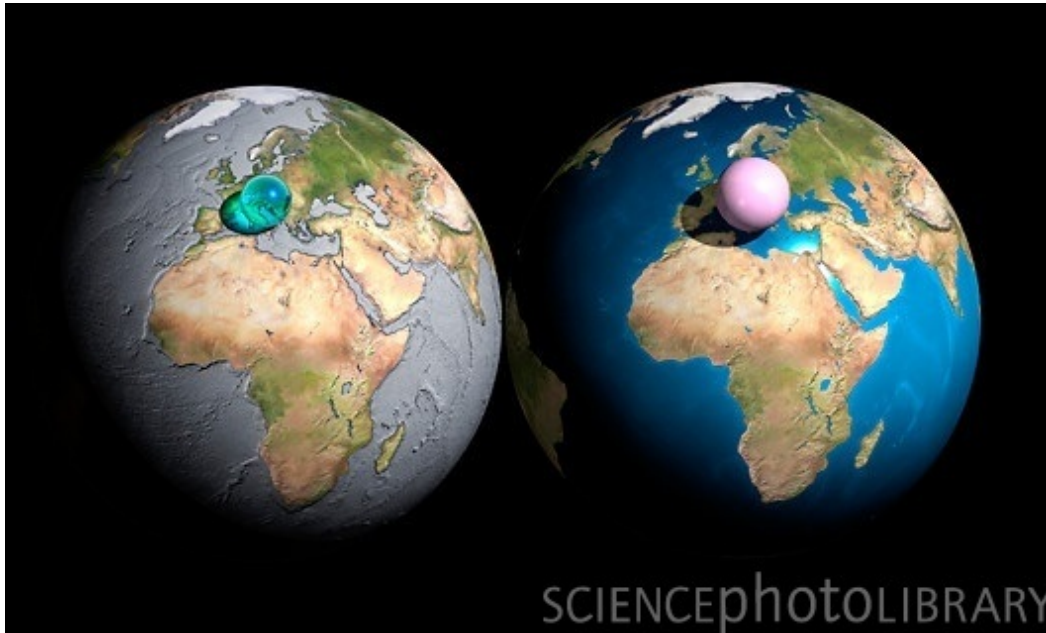
The idea positively scares them.

Coral reefs are part of the foundation of the ocean food chain. Nearly half the fish the world eats make their homes around them. Hundreds of millions of people worldwide — by some estimates, 1 billion across Asia alone — depend on them for their food and their livelihoods.

If the reefs vanished, experts say, hunger, poverty and political instability could ensue.

"Whole nations will be threatened in terms of their existence," said Carl Gustaf Lundin of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

[New Ways to Gauge the Finite Atmosphere](#)



I recently became aware of fascinating efforts by Adam Nieman to help society appreciate environmental challenges in fresh ways by visualizing volumes that are otherwise abstractions. In 2003 he created the image above, illustrating the volume of the world's oceans and atmosphere (if the air were all at sea-level density) by rendering them as spheres sitting next to the Earth instead of spread out over its surface. To my eye, this helps powerfully convey the finite nature of these shared global assets.

[Saudi may shelve Ras Tanura refinery plan - sources](#)

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The kingdom put the \$8 billion project on hold last year, one of several schemes held up while the world's top oil producer aimed to take advantage of the economic slowdown to drive down the cost of new projects.

But while state oil firm Saudi Aramco and partners have since proceeded with other new refinery plans, expansion of Ras Tanura stayed on hold and preliminary design work has slowed, the sources said.

[Natural Gas Falls Below \\$4 as Supplies Gain More Than Forecast](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Natural gas fell below \$4 per million British thermal units for the first time in almost six months as a government report showed that U.S. inventories of the power-plant fuel rose more than analysts anticipated.

Inventories gained 11 billion cubic feet in the week ended March 19 to 1.626 trillion cubic feet, the Energy Department said today. Analysts forecast an increase of 8 billion. The five-year average change is a decline of 37 billion.

[Doug Casey: Making Terrorism Your Friend](#)

Iran seems like the obvious flashpoint. If the U.S. strikes Iran, oil will go to \$200 a barrel. In the long run, that oil could be replaced, especially at the higher prices that make oil sands, shale oils, heavy oils and such more economic – but in the short run, the supply is extremely inelastic. You can't just throw a switch and get more oil from some other source. You combine that with the financial chaos that would ensue, and even decreased usage wouldn't make up for the crunch. Higher oil prices seem like a lock-synch at this point.

[Houston: where energy is king](#)

By the 1970s, US crude output was in decline. Much of what is left in the ground today is uneconomic to access, and the world's major oil companies have spent the decades since then seeking new supplies overseas. Now even economically accessible global assets are hard to find, leading to talk of peak oil and the need to find alternatives to fossil fuels. With billions of dollars in investments being poured into wind and solar energy as well as biofuels, many outsiders predict Houston's central place in the world's energy industry could be lost. But that could not be further from the truth.

"It's a myth that we're getting off fossil fuel," says Amy Myers Jaffe, energy expert at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy.

[Hybrid vs. diesel: luxury mpg champs](#)

When the talk turns to saving fuel, "hybrids" naturally rise to the surface. But there's something else that ought to be part of that discussion: diesel. Unfortunately it rarely gets mentioned, at least in this country.

Consider this: Combined city and highway fuel economy for Lexus' new HS250h compact hybrid car is 35 miles per gallon. For the similarly sized Audi A3 TDI diesel car it's 34 mpg. And, in highway driving, the Audi goes considerably farther at 42 mpg vs. 34 for the Lexus.

[Please Pay Me To Use Less Energy](#)

EnerNOC pays companies to cut energy use. Why won't someone pay homeowners to do the same?

[Energy efficiency? Alone, it's not all it's cracked up to be](#)

Imagine a future in which all our cars, appliances and industrial processes are 10 times – maybe even 100 times – more energy efficient than today’s models. Wouldn’t that be great? Just think of all the oil and coal saved, all the energy bills reduced, all the carbon dioxide emissions we stop pumping into the air.

Or maybe not. While energy efficiency is usually near the top on official to-do lists for combating climate change and staving off the ravages of peak oil, it tends to look better on paper or pdf than it does in real life.

[Russia, Ukraine PMs edge closer on gas issues](#)

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia and Ukraine edged toward compromise over a gas supply deal that divides the ex-Soviet neighbours during a visit by Ukraine's new prime minister, Mykola Azarov, to Moscow on Thursday.

[Yukos haunts Rosneft: A spectre of litigation](#)

REMEMBER Yukos, Russia’s biggest oil firm, which was bankrupted by improbable tax claims and then dismembered in bogus auctions? The Russian government would rather that you did not. Although it has expunged Yukos from official registers, the firm’s ghost is haunting the Kremlin and its state oil company, Rosneft, which swallowed Yukos’s assets. In the past few weeks this ghost has been particularly active, making appearances in several European and American courts, demanding retribution and winning injunctions against Rosneft. Earlier this month an English court froze Rosneft’s local assets in a case brought by Yukos Capital, an offshore affiliate of Yukos. A week later a similar freezing order was imposed by a court in Ireland.

[Hayes Valley: A Former Freeway Turns into a Farm](#)

The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake left many of San Francisco's urban freeways structurally unsound. (Back then, there *were* many, carving up the core of the city.) But the flipside was a boon: The teardown of broad segments of elevated road has led to the revitalization—the reinvention, really—of neighborhoods like Hayes Valley. It has also given the city chunks of unused space, including the stretch between Laguna, Octavia, Oak, and Fell Streets, where ramps to the old Central Freeway haven't led anywhere in years.

San Francisco plans to develop this lot eventually, probably with mixed housing and green space. But a clever new project has been conceived for the interim years: an urban agriculture cooperative called the Hayes Valley Farm. "The Hayes Valley Neighborhood association contacted the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development to 'activate' the lots," says Chris Burley, now the project's director. Agriculture was the idea that moved everyone. "We've all seen the power of gardens to transform a space," he says.

[Lights out for climate change](#)

Attention travelers and aliens assigned to monitor our planet from outer space: you may notice major landmarks, tourist attractions, and large areas of many cities and towns around the world going dark for an hour on March 27.

Do not be alarmed. It's just Earth Hour, a rolling, global black-out designed to draw attention to climate change. First organized in Sydney, Australia back in 2007, during last year's Earth Hour there were voluntary lights-out events in 87 countries. This year, millions of people, more than 115 countries, thousands of cities and hundreds of major attractions and landmarks worldwide have pledged to switch off the lights for an hour as well.

[John Michael Greer: The Logic of Abundance](#)

The three centuries of exponential growth that put those bootprints on the gray dust of the Sea of Tranquillity were made possible by the conjunction of historical accidents and geological laws that allowed a handful of nations to seize the fantastic treasure of highly concentrated energy buried in the Earth's fossil fuels and burn through it at ever-increasing rates, flooding their economies with almost unimaginable amounts of cheap and highly concentrated energy. It's been fashionable to assume that the arc of progress was what made all that energy available, but there's very good reason to think that this puts the cart well in front of the horse. Rather, it was the huge surpluses of available energy that made technological progress both possible and economically viable, as inventors, industrialists, and ordinary people all discovered that it really was cheaper to have machines powered by fossil fuels take over jobs that had been done for millennia by human and animal muscles, fueled by solar energy in the form of food.

[Kurt Cobb: Will Enhanced Oil Recovery Be An Oil Supply Savior?](#)

Oil supply optimists often say that the application of enhanced oil recovery techniques to existing and future wells will vastly expand oil reserves and oil production. The trouble is these techniques aren't new, and they are already being widely applied. That means current oil reserves and production already reflect any effect they have had.

[Oilsands market shifting, Enbridge VP says](#)

The U.S. Gulf Coast, once seen as the largest new market for expanding production from Canada's oilsands, may not need as much oil as thought, Steve Wuori, executive vice-president of pipeline operator Enbridge Inc. said Tuesday.

Wuori told the Reuters Canadian Oil Sands Summit that the Gulf of Mexico region, the

largest concentration of refineries in North America, will likely replace declining heavy oil supplies from Mexico and Venezuela with crude from Brazil or new deepwater fields in the Gulf of Mexico.

That will push new Canadian supply to the U.S. Midwest, which already takes the bulk of Canada's oil exports. A series of refinery expansion and conversion projects in the region is increasing the appetite for heavy crude from the oilsands.

[Energy's future unsettling](#)

New Brunswick business groups are lamenting the cancellation of a power deal with Hydro-Québec that promised to address what's seen as a growing energy crisis in the province.

The announcement by the New Brunswick and Quebec governments Wednesday that they will not move forward with a \$3.2-billion agreement for Hydro-Québec to buy some NB Power assets in exchange for power rate freezes and reductions for New Brunswickers was a bitter pill to swallow for industry leaders reached for comment.

[Saudis to Turn Increasingly to Oil to Meet Power Needs](#)

Saudi Arabia's booming economy and soaring demand for electricity is increasing the kingdom's reliance on oil to produce power. By 2012, it may be using 1.2 million barrels a day -- nearly two times current levels -- to meet its electricity needs. This increasing use of oil is occurring because the Saudis' natural gas production cannot keep up with power demand.

The gas shortage is occurring even though Saudi Aramco has been working to boost natural gas production. But a combination of reasons and trends point to the inevitable increased use of oil, a factor that could have deep impact on world oil markets in the future, despite Saudi Arabia's current spare oil production capacity of about 4 million barrels per day.

[\\$60bn China gas deal a threat to prices for Queenslanders](#)

THE \$60 billion deal involving exports of Queensland natural gas to China could have the potential to slightly push up domestic gas prices on Australia's east coast.

[Nigeria: Nation's Silent Energy Crisis - the Way Forward](#)

Nigeria is experiencing a silent energy crisis. About 95 million Nigerians depend on wood for their daily cooking.

Wood energy constitutes 90% of household energy use and today the demand for wood far outstrips supply, resulting in rising prices. Despite a national policy to promote a transition away from wood energy use, prospects remain bleak. Over 92% of Nigerians - approximately 130 million people live in poverty. Poverty and weak policies present a critical roadblock to fuel substitution.

[US To Give \\$125m To Help Pakistan Meet Energy Crisis](#)

The United States pledged on Wednesday to give \$125 million for energy development in Pakistan and would also assist in thermal power projects.

In a joint press briefing with Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Washington after holding strategic dialogue with Pakistani delegation, she termed strategic sitting conducive not only for Pakistan but for US administration also.

[Govt taking all possible measures to reduce gap between demand and supply: Raja Pervez Ashraf](#)

Minister for Water and Power Raja Pervez Ashraf on Thursday underlined said that government is taking all possible measures to reduce the gap between demand and supply. According to Spokesman of Ministry of Water and Power, he said during a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Energy Crisis (CCEC) held here Thursday under the Chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Water & Power, Raja Pervez Ashraf to discuss the current power situation and related matters.

[Why Pakistan should not get a nuclear deal](#)

Pakistan, arguably, has been the US's best ally in South Asia in the post-colonial era. Off late, however, the relationship between the two countries has been marred by the 9/11 attacks and subsequent acts of terror around the world.

As the two countries begin their week-long high-level strategic talks later today, Pakistan will be keen to make the most of it. It will, however, be interesting to see how many goodies the US doles out to its "long-time friend".

[Energy consumption in industrial sector declined in 2009](#)

KARACHI - The share of industrial sector in overall energy consumption has declined to 40 per cent in FY09, an energy analyst said on Wednesday.

[Speaker criticizes commuter rail proposal](#)

The cost of subsidizing these systems negates any potential savings in energy and reductions in pollution, O'Toole said.

He said that for the cost of government subsidies per riders of most rail systems, each rider could receive a hybrid car for each year for the rest of their lives. He suggested that the proposed KRM line could cost up to \$8,135 per potential rider in government subsidies.

[Nuclear Power Beats Coal, Gas When Lending Costs Low, IEA Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The International Energy Agency, an energy policy adviser to 28 countries, said it expects nuclear power to be a more competitive energy source than coal or natural gas when borrowing costs are low.

The Paris-based agency studied cost data for 190 plants in 21 countries under two discount rate scenarios for a report released today called "Projected Costs of Generating Electricity," co-written with the Nuclear Energy Agency.

"In the low discount rate case, more capital-intensive, low-carbon technologies such as nuclear energy are the most competitive solution compared with coal-fired plants without carbon capture and natural gas-fired combined cycle plants for baseload generation," according to the report.

[Crude Oil Futures Rise as Equity Markets Gain, Dollar Weakens](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Oil rose as equity markets advanced in Europe and the U.S. dollar slipped versus the euro, enhancing the appeal of commodities for hedging inflation.

Oil earlier fell as much as 0.5 percent after the U.S. Energy Department said yesterday crude inventories rose 7.25 million barrels to the highest since August, more than four times the increase estimated in a Bloomberg survey.

[The Coming Boom in Oil Service](#)

Now, in 2009, the easy pickings are mostly gone. Salt domes like Spindletop are tapped dry (Spindletop itself quit producing in the 1930's). Lots of hydrocarbons remain in the earth, but they are increasingly difficult to extract.

[Peak oil tax? UK oil & gas tax take at all time low](#)

Peak oil tax? The UK government's tax take from oil and gas production in the North Sea fell to its lowest ever level, under the current fiscal regime, in the year ended March

31, 2010, according to government data published on Wednesday 24th March 2010.

The UK treasury expects to take £6.4 billion (GBP) in corporation tax and petroleum revenue tax from companies producing oil and gas in the UK over the year. This is less than half the tax take in the previous year, during which oil prices hit their record high.

[Rahui Katene: Infrastructure Bill](#)

In this light, the Maori Party supports improved public transport, rather than investment in roading itself.

We want to see more support for integrated public transport networks of buses, trains, walking and cycling tracks. We are concerned now, about the impact of infrastructural decisions on our environment.

And in particular we want to reduce our reliance on oil in the face of peak oil. We have a preference for transport and roading which is frequent, reliable and inexpensive.

[Minsk sues over Russian oil fees](#)

Belarus has filed a lawsuit against Russia over oil export fees, the Belarussian Justice Ministry said today.

[Gazprom May Not Lower Gas Price for Ukraine, Kommersant Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Russia's OAO Gazprom does not view participation in a joint venture to manage Ukraine's gas pipelines as sufficient grounds to lower the price Ukraine pays for imports of Russian natural gas, Kommersant reported, citing officials with the knowledge of the matter.

[Turkey strengthens Iraqi energy ties](#)

MONTREAL - Turkey last week strengthened its energy ties with Iraq by renewing a contract to import Iraqi oil to the Turkish Mediterranean Sea port of Ceyhan, where Azerbaijani oil also arrives via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. Earlier this year, it was announced that Iraq will export between 5 billion and 10 billion cubic meters per year of natural gas to Turkey for inclusion in the Nabucco pipeline carrying the fuel to Europe.

The oil will come from Kirkuk in Iraqi Kurdistan, along the route of the already existing 1,000 kilometer Kirkuk-Ceyhan oil pipeline. The pipeline, built in the late 1970s, consists of two trunks, with a combined design capacity of 1.6 million barrels per day, or more than half as much again as the BTC's design capacity.

[Sinopec to Build Gas Chemicals Plant in Kazakhstan](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China Petroleum & Chemical Corp., the Hong Kong-listed company known as Sinopec, won a contract to build a \$1.7 billion polypropylene plant in western Kazakhstan.

Sinopec agreed to buy and export all the polypropylene produced at the facility, Kazakh Deputy Oil and Gas Minister Aset Magauov told reporters today in Almaty. The Export-Import Bank of China will provide a \$1.26 billion loan for the project, he said.

[Eni May Help Finance Kazakh Energy Projects, Gain Caspian Fields](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Eni SpA may arrange financing for six energy projects in Kazakhstan in exchange for development rights to Caspian oil fields, said Galimzhan Amanturlin, a managing director at KazMunaiGaz National Co.

[Exxon Gets U.S. Export Bank Financing After Paying for Travel](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Exxon Mobil Corp. and its partners in a \$15 billion Papua New Guinea gas project last year paid the travel expenses for employees of the U.S. Export-Import Bank as it considered whether to help fund the venture.

[PetroChina Full-Year Profit Drops on Lower Crude Oil](#)

(Bloomberg) -- PetroChina Co., the world's biggest company by market value, posted a 9.7 percent drop in full-year profit, missing estimates, after oil prices fell from a record.

[ONGC Said to Seek Acquisition of Canadian Oil Sands](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Oil & Natural Gas Corp., India's biggest energy explorer, is seeking to buy oil-sands assets in Canada, three people familiar with the matter said.

ONGC is currently evaluating the finances of a Canadian field, the people said, asking not to be identified because the discussions are preliminary. The explorer is considering buying an asset that can produce about 10,000 barrels a day of heavy oil, worth at least \$1 billion, two of the people said.

[Minister sees hidden agenda behind oil sands foes](#)

(Reuters) - Some international groups behind campaigns opposing Canadian oil sands development are actually trying to erect trade barriers under the guise of protecting the environment, Alberta Energy Minister Ron Liepert said on Tuesday.

[Lukoil Abandons Iran Project Under Pressure of U.S. Sanctions](#)

(Bloomberg) -- OAO Lukoil, the Russian oil producer with the most overseas assets, abandoned work in Iran because of the threat of U.S. sanctions, while saying it may still return to the Persian Gulf nation.

[Dutch Power Secrets at RWE, Vattenfall Increase Costs](#)

(Bloomberg) -- More than five months after buying the two biggest Dutch utilities, RWE AG and Vattenfall AB are resisting consumers' calls to reduce costs by continuously disclosing to buyers and sellers how much power they produce.

The companies have said they helped boost competition and lower prices in Germany by voluntarily releasing supply data and publishing planned and unplanned outages. RWE cut fees 8 percent in 2009 "due to competitive pressure," Chief Financial Officer Rolf Pohlig said Feb. 25. Vattenfall began selling power in January to Aurubis AG, Europe's biggest copper refiner, under a contract that may reduce its electric bills by 5 percent.

[Chavez extends Venezuela Easter holiday to save energy](#)

President Hugo Chavez has added three days to Venezuela's Easter holiday to deal with a growing energy crisis.

The move - which will close government and public offices - means most Venezuelans will have a seven-day break starting on 1 April.

Mr Chavez said the aim of the measure was not to encourage "laziness, but to save energy."

[Dubai World gets \\$9.5 B bailout](#)

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (CNN) -- The Dubai government announced plans Thursday to inject \$9.5 billion in funding to help out its state-owned holding company, Dubai World.

[What if It Was All Just a Big Bubble?](#)

One of the things that many people go through their entire lives without ever realizing is that conditions haven't always been the way they remember them to be. Due to the length of a typical lifetime and the number of those years that individuals are productive, it's reasonable to think that someone in their mid-60s could retire today and look back at the last 40 years only to conclude that what they just experienced was *normal*.

But, what if the last 40 years were anything *but* normal?

What if, in the world of finance and economics, it was all just a big bubble?

[China tops USA in spending on clean energy](#)

China is emerging as the world's clean-energy powerhouse, according to a new study by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Last year, China spent more than any other major country on clean energy, including wind and solar, toppling the U.S. from the top spot for the first time in five years, the Pew report says. The U.S. is also on the verge of losing the top spot in terms of installed renewable energy to China.

[Ranking Cities on Building Efficiency](#)

Los Angeles and Washington took the top spots in the United States Environmental Protection Agency's ranking of cities with the most energy efficient buildings.

[Warren Buffett sees strong rail system as key to U.S. growth](#)

Buffett chuckles at the suggestion that buying the nation's second-biggest railroad is a sign of senility. He argues that railroads represent the future. They're best-positioned to haul the raw material and finished goods for a nation and economy that he insists are bound to grow. Unlike trucks, trains don't have to compete on congested highways. Nor do railroads depend on strapped governments to maintain infrastructure.

"They don't need the government to build them new highways and airports," he says in an interview with USA TODAY. "They've already invested heavily in their infrastructure and technology, and they plan to invest more to keep up with the growing demand.

"They're the only mode of freight transportation that can handle growth. What's not to like about that?"

[Monbiot: Windfarms are stricken by the British refusal to share](#)

If every windfarm company pledged 10% of its income to the local community, many more would be approved.

[Stop Hand-Wringing About Peak Oil and Climate Change and Do Something](#)

You may or may not have heard of the Transition movement — described by its founder, Rob Hopkins, as “an exercise in engaged optimism”— yet Transition’s ideas are informing and even guiding the conversation of how communities confront the twin crises of peak oil and climate change.

[Protecting water resources a critical political issue](#)

Sandford, the keynote speaker for World Water Day at UBC Okanagan, made it clear water is as much a concern for our world, and our country, as peak oil and climate change; in fact, they’re all the same problem.

If you understand that energy issues are water issues and water issues are energy issues then the political decisions needed to conserve both—and stem the tide of climate change—really become much clearer, in his mind.

But the entire move hinges on avoiding political lobbies which push profit over logic. “We cannot afford to let crucial water issues be hijacked by public relations spin,” he said. “The domain of water resources is not politically neutral.”

[The Battle Over Bottled Water](#)

Published in recognition of World Water Day, a video called The Story of Bottled Water (at right, on top), made its debut on YouTube this week, using animation and snappy narration to convey what its makers consider to be the evils of bottled water. (It comes from the same folks who produced “The Story of Stuff” — an eco-themed viral video sensation from last year.)

Not missing a beat, the International Bottled Water Association, declared the new video to be sensational, and quickly posted its own minifilm, highlighting the sustainability practices of its members, which include major brands like Nestlé.

[Farming reform needed to end hunger without obesity](#)

OSLO (Reuters) - Agriculture needs revolutionary change to confront threats such as global warming and end hunger in developing nations without adding to the ranks of the obese, an international study showed on Thursday.

The report said South Asia and Africa were "battlegrounds for poverty reduction" as the world population rose to a peak in 2050. Prospects for quick advances in curbing hunger are better for India and Bangladesh than sub-Saharan Africa, it said.

[Deforestation Continues, but More Slowly, Report Says](#)

Deforestation slowed in the past decade, in the first sign that global conservation efforts are bearing fruit, but an area the size of Costa Rica is still being destroyed each year, the United Nations said on Thursday.

[How Republicans Learned To Reject Climate Change](#)

As climate change emerged as a top issue on the national scene a few years ago, it had one unusual quality: The response to it showed surprising signs of bipartisan support.

Two or three years ago, Republicans such as Sen. John McCain and Govs. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Charlie Crist played nearly as prominent a role as Al Gore in advocating a robust regulatory response.

No more. Climate hasn't yet become as partisan an issue as, say, health care and taxes. But it's getting there.

[A Physics Maven's Take on Skeptical Science](#)

I've been meaning to highlight a particularly interesting blog on climate, Skeptical Science, and finally have the chance. What's appealing about it is the simple way its Australian creator, John Cook, has cast his journey. It's basically a list of reference-laden responses to the many assertions made by one or another of the variegated camps rejecting the need for action to curb greenhouse gases. There is a conventional blog stream covering developments as they occur. But most useful, perhaps, in a world of information overload, is the basic litany of 101 (and counting) skeptics' arguments and responses. (Users of iPhones might say the most useful element is the popular new Skeptical Science application for the phone.) Here's one example from the online list:

Skeptic Argument: "It's the sun."

What the Science Says: In the last 35 years of global warming, the sun has shown a slight cooling trend. Sun and climate have been going in opposite directions.



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