



Drumbeat: April 29, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on April 29, 2010 - 9:10am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Oil-rich Venezuela gripped by economic crisis](#)

SAN CRISTOBAL, VENEZUELA -- Every day for the past three months, government-programmed blackouts have meant the lights flicker and go dark in a city that once bustled with commerce. And Fifth Street, with its auto parts stores and car repair shops, has ground to a halt.

"We just stop," said Jesus Yanis, who paints cars. "We don't work."

Neither does the rest of Venezuela, where a punishing, months-old energy crisis and years of state interventions in the economy are taking a brutal toll on private business. The result is that the economy is flickering and going dark, too, challenging Venezuela's mercurial leader, Hugo Chávez, and his socialist experiment like never before.

No matter that Venezuela is one of the world's great oil powers -- among the top five providers of crude to the United States. Economists say Venezuela is gripped by an economic crisis that has no easy or fast solution, even if sluggish oil production were ramped up and profligate state spending were cut.

tandard problems is the risk of a blowout: a sudden surge of crude oil and natural gas that can come bursting up through a well at any point between the moment it's first drilled and the moment the relatively sturdy structure that handles production is in place.

[U.S. Govt. Issues Safety Review of All Offshore Rigs](#)

The Obama Administration Thursday escalated its response to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, as administration officials said for the first time the disaster could prompt a re-evaluation of President Barack Obama's recently announced plan to allow expanded offshore oil and gas drilling.

Administration officials outlined their stepped up response to the oil spill as a giant oil slick headed for a landfall as early as Friday evening.

[MMS Postpones 2010 Offshore Industry Safety Awards](#)

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) announced today that the 2010 Annual Industry SAFE Awards Luncheon scheduled for May 3, 2010 at the Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) in Houston, Texas has been postponed.

The ongoing situation with the Transocean Deepwater Horizon drilling accident has caused the MMS to dedicate considerable resources to the successful resolution of this event, which will conflict with holding this ceremony next week.

[Afghanistan forces face four more years of combat, warns Nato official](#)

British and other foreign troops deployed in Afghanistan face a "very tough" time ahead and can expect to be engaged in a combat role for three or four more years, Nato's most senior civilian official in the country said today.

[Argentina To Import 900,000 Cubic Meters Of Diesel - Report](#)

BUENOS AIRES (Dow Jones)--The Argentine government plans to import 900,000 cubic meters of diesel from Venezuela to compensate for an expected shortage of fuel this winter, the daily El Cronista reported Thursday, citing unnamed Planning Ministry officials.

The diesel will be used to supply new power generators amid an expected decline in gas supplies during the colder months that run from May through September.

[Fuel shortage feared as Shell staff plan strike](#)

More than 600 employees of Shell Uganda and Kenya plan joint strikes to protest their failure to secure job guarantees in the face of the company's planned withdrawal from the two East African countries.

[Exxon, Shell Make Offer to Avoid Argentine Oil Strike](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Exxon Mobil Corp., Petroleo Brasileiro SA and other oil producers offered Argentine workers an 18 percent raise in a bid to avert a nationwide strike that could lead to fuel shortages, an industry group said.

[Karnataka facing severe power crisis](#)

NEW DELHI/BANGALORE: Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa on Wednesday said that the State is facing a severe power shortage with demand-supply gap of around

22%. The daily restricted energy consumption is around 150 million units (MUs) with an average annual load growth of 8-10%.

The daily energy shortage is about 20%. The restricted peak demand is about 7877 MW and the availability is about 6100 MW. The demand - supply gap is also widening year by year.

[Do-it-yourselfers leading charge as electric vehicles gain traction](http://www.wenatcheeworld.com/news/2010/apr/29/do-it-yourselfers-leading-charge-as-electric-vehic/)

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[Oregon still a role player in biodiesel production](#)

MEDFORD — Oregon biodiesel production is still feeling its way through the industry's formative stages.

The hip alternative fuel of the new millennium has enjoyed legislative and environmental support. It's created a few jobs, provided a steady market for waste oil from restaurants and spawned the need for new farm crops.

The most ardent of proponents, however, realize that developing a sustainable fuel source for the 21st century is accompanied by growing pains. Even Oregon's top producer appears to be a mere role player when grouped with out-of-state entries.

[Turning our Victorian terrace into an ecohome: part one](#)

Ecohome envy. That's what I've had for a very long time. I've visited new houses of every eco type - a new build ecohouse in Clapham, the Angell Town ecohousing estate in Brixton and beautiful designer co-housing (Hockerton in Nottingham and Springhill in Stroud).

Then I started hearing about 'ecoretrofits'. No, they're not 1950s makeovers - it's the eco refurbishment of old housing stock. Most of the houses in the UK are old, draughty, single brick houses (no cavity walls) that have been around a long time and are likely to be around way past 2050 - the date by which the Government has committed the UK to an 80 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

[Oil-rich Venezuela gripped by economic crisis](#)

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[The wind man who beat Cape Cod's elite](#)

Gordon's laugh has now turned into a celebratory smile. After a vicious nine-year fight on Cape Cod, Gordon has finally won approval of his wind farm to be built in the iconic waters of Nantucket Sound. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar on Wednesday signed off on the project.

"We're trying to pioneer a new path to move America forward in obtaining cleaner energy, a healthier environment and putting people to work to harness the inexhaustible winds that we're blessed with off the Cape," he said.

[ADNOC awards gas contracts](#)

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) has awarded more than US\$5 billion (Dh18.35bn) of contracts to develop the strategic Shah gasfield, just a day after the US oil major ConocoPhillips pulled out of the \$10bn project.

[Pakistan: Ban imposed on new village electrification](#)

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Water and Power Raja Pervez Ashraf Thursday said that government has imposed ban on new village electrification to conserve energy and minimize power crisis. Speaking at function organized by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce here he said the ban would remain intact till the normalization of the current power situation. The minister said protection to commerce and industries was the government top priority and all out efforts were being made to provide more facilities to this sector.

[Pakistani court rules out LNG deal](#)

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, April 29 (UPI) -- A contract signed in February with French energy company GDF Suez and Islamabad didn't follow standard protocols, a Pakistani court ruled.

The high court in Pakistan ruled that a contract to import liquefied natural gas from the French energy company violated standard procedures, The Wall Street Journal reports.

[China to build two nuclear reactors in Pakistan](#)

BEIJING: China has agreed to build two new civilian nuclear reactors in Pakistan, a report said on Thursday, amid persistent concerns about the safety of nuclear materials in the restive south Asian state.

Chinese companies will build at least two new 650-megawatt reactors at Chashma in Punjab province, the Financial Times said.

[Energy conservation a social responsibility](#)

Pakistan is facing the worst energy crisis of her history for the second consecutive year. This year we are experiencing increased load shedding from the very onset of the summers. The life is disturbed to an extent that demonstrations are being taken out in every nook and corner of the country. There is a definite increase in public protest compared to the last year. It is due to their lack of faith in the ability of the government to resolve the crisis.

[Islamabad traders demand one hour extension](#)

The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) convened a meeting of representatives of traders here on Tuesday to reach a consensus over closure of markets in the light of government's announcement regarding conservation of energy.

Most traders were in favour of closing markets at 10 p.m. However, ICCI President Zahid Maqbool said that energy crisis was a national issue and business community should cooperate with the government in this connection.

[Ending America's energy deficit](#)

First, let's slash our dependency on imported oil and pursue advanced technologies like next-generation biofuels, improve the fuel economy of cars and trucks and build a truck fleet powered by natural gas.

Second, let's create jobs in new energy industries -- manufacturing, delivering and

installing alternative energy technologies.

Despite mixed signals from Washington, clean energy is one of the few bright spots in the sagging U.S. economy.

[A green light unto the nations](#)

Israel can lay a leading role in curing the West of oil addiction.

[Green tech innovation is moving faster than people's imaginations](#)

Over 300 representatives took part in the exercise, which resulted in a number of findings including that the majority believe the technologies key to our future either already exist or are under development and that it is more the adoption of these technologies, not the development of new ones, that should be the focus.

“Excluding the odd hover car or personal rocket ship, we found that the vast majority of what was suggested is already being implemented to some degree or another – suggesting that technology is moving faster than people’s imaginations and shaping the way we live as it does so,” comments Neil Butcher of Arup’s Advanced Technology & Research practice.

[The Green Movement is garbage](#)

The Green Movement activists make it sound so easy. Ride a bike, eat organic, turn off your lights, plant a tree - it's so simple! If you do these things, it will solve the global energy crisis, prevent famine worldwide, and save you money. They way they talk makes one wonder how we ever weren't going green.

[Why I stopped believing in environmentalism and started the Dark Mountain Project](#)

To me, this is the most exciting thing about the Dark Mountain Project. It has brought together people from all over the world, from varied backgrounds – writers, poets, illustrators, engineers, scientists, woodworkers, teachers, songwriters, farmers – all of whom are tied together by a shared vision. It is a vision that a few years back would have seemed heretical to many greens, but which is now gaining wide traction as the failure of humanity to respond to the crises it has created becomes increasingly obvious. Together we are able to say it loud and clear: we are not going to 'save the planet'. The planet is not ours to save. The planet is not dying; but our civilisation might be, and neither green technology nor ethical shopping is going to prevent a serious crash.

[U.S. may send in troops as Gulf oil spill worsens](#)

NEW ORLEANS—A massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is even worse than believed and as the government grows concerned that the rig's operator is ill-equipped to contain it, officials are offering a military response to try to avert a massive environmental disaster along the ecologically fragile U.S. coastline.

But time may be running out. Not only was a third leak discovered — which government officials said is spewing five times as much oil into the water than originally estimated — but it might be closer to shore than previously known, and could have oil washing up on shore by Friday.

At the same time, there appeared to be a growing rift developing between BP PLC, the operator of the oil rig that exploded last week in the deep waters of the Gulf, and the Coast Guard, which is overseeing the increasingly desperate operation to contain the spill and clean it up.

[Crude Rises as Equities Advance, U.S. Refinery Activity Surges](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Crude oil rose for a second day in New York as equities rallied and a report showed U.S. refinery activity surged to its highest level in almost two years.

Oil gained 1 percent yesterday as the Federal Open Market Committee said economic conditions “are likely to warrant exceptionally low levels of the federal funds rate for an extended period.” Gasoline supplies fell 1.24 million barrels last week, a report from the Energy Department showed. They were forecast to increase, according to a Bloomberg News survey.

[Naphtha Margin Narrowing to Gasoline on China](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The gap between the price of naphtha and gasoline in Asia is narrowing for a fourth straight week, the longest stretch since November, as China's manufacturing economy strengthens.

[Sinopec Refines 20% More Oil to Fuel China's Economy](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China Petroleum & Chemical Corp. refined 20 percent more crude oil in the first quarter compared with a year earlier to meet higher fuel demand from car owners and factories in the world's fastest-growing major economy.

[Iraq eyes doubling of oil output by 2014](#)

CAIRO -- Iraq says it aims to almost double its oil output to 4.5 million barrels per day

by 2014.

Under a new five-year plan posted on the Ministry of Planning's website, Iraq also says it hopes to sharply boost its domestic refining and oil storage capacity and raise gas output.

[Woodside, Shell Pick Floating LNG to Develop Sunrise](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Woodside Petroleum Ltd., Australia's second-largest oil and gas producer, said it plans to develop the Sunrise liquefied natural gas project in the Timor Sea using a floating plant to process the fuel.

Royal Dutch Shell Plc, a partner in the venture, said Sunrise would become the second project, after Prelude, to use Shell's technology to chill gas to liquid on board a vessel. The Sunrise floating LNG plant would produce 4 million metric tons of fuel a year, Shell Australia said in a statement today.

[Gazprom Quarterly Net Rises Eightfold as Gas Demand Recovers](#)

(Bloomberg) -- OAO Gazprom, the world's biggest gas producer, posted an eightfold increase in profit after fuel consumption in Russia and Europe recovered.

[PPL Agrees to Acquire E.ON U.S. Unit for \\$6.7 Billion](#)

(Bloomberg) -- PPL Corp. agreed to buy E.ON AG's U.S. power and natural gas unit for \$6.7 billion in cash as the owner of Pennsylvania's second-largest utility seeks growth outside its home state.

[Sempra Settles Litigation, Cuts Earnings Forecast](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Sempra Energy, the co-owner of an energy-trading venture with Royal Bank of Scotland Group Plc, agreed to a \$410 million settlement of claims arising from the California energy crisis in 2000 and 2001. The company also cut its 2010 earnings forecast.

[World Energy Demand Unexpectedly Increases](#)

One of the only benefits of a global recession was supposed to be a reduced demand for energy, particularly for transportation fuels, such as oil.

Surprisingly, that's not happening.

[MMC May Propose \\$1.2 Billion Power Plant Expansion](#)

(Bloomberg) -- MMC Corp., Malaysia's second- biggest electricity producer, may propose to the government a plan to spend as much as \$1.2 billion to expand its Tanjung Bin coal-fired power plant to avert a potential supply shortage.

A power reserve shortfall may emerge as electricity from the Bakun hydroelectric dam on Borneo island may not be transmitted to Peninsular Malaysia as planned, Hasni Harun, who will become MMC's group managing director on May 3, told reporters in Kuala Lumpur today.

[GE to Tap Demand for Smart Meters in \\$200 Billion Global Market](#)

(Bloomberg) -- General Electric Co. is poised to tap the \$200 billion smart-meter market as nations upgrade more power meters to improve electricity use and lower costs.

More than a billion electricity measuring units may be changed to "smart meters" in the next two decades, said Luke Clemente, general manager for GE Energy's digital energy business. A smart meter system may cost \$100 to \$200 a unit, depending on the technology used, and the business may be worth as much as \$200 billion excluding add-on systems and devices, based on calculations from GE data.

[Ten Green Energy Gambles for 2010: Update 2](#)

The stock market is up, and my bets against it are down, except in energy. It's time to double down.

[Wind-Power Projects May Stall on U.K. Grid Regulation](#)

(Bloomberg) -- A U.K. plan to install more than 8,000 offshore wind turbines by 2020 may be delayed by a government plan to contract out work to connect the wind farms to the grid, according to Centrica Plc and E.ON AG.

Regulator Ofgem has said allowing competitive bids would attract investors to the industry and curb the 15 billion-pound (\$23 billion) cost of connecting 33,000 megawatts of capacity over the decade. Wind-power producers contend that awarding the work exclusively to other companies, who may lack expertise in offshore wind, could slow projects.

[World No. 2 Disc Maker Bets on Solar Over Blu-Rays](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Moser Baer India Ltd., the world's second-largest maker of blank discs, expects its solar unit to dominate within five years as demand for clean energy in India outpaces that for DVDs and Blu-rays.

[The Arches' Behaviour festival gets intimate](#)

If these shows don't grab your attention, maybe *Dean Gibbons and the Knowledge of Death* will. This show combines puppetry, physical theatre and striking visual affects to tell a darkly comic work that looks at the twin threats of climate change and peak oil.

[York holds Energy and Climate Fair](#)

10 a.m. — "Peak Oil," a slide presentation by York resident and engineer Tom Page.

[Citizen's Group Plans Extensive Audit of U.N. Climate Report](#)

A leading global warming skeptic recruited a group of concerned citizens to fact-check the sources referenced in the U.N.'s latest climate-change bible -- and gave the report an "F." Now she's planning the nail in the coffin: a comprehensive audit of the entire report.

[Saving the planet: Australia slips from leader to laggard](#)

Sydney - Australia was always an unlikely instigator of action to mitigate climate change.

It is coal-export world champion and league-leader in per-capital greenhouse-gas emissions. Along with the United States, it refused to accept the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which set emissions-reduction targets for rich nations.

But carbon crusader was the mantle Kevin Rudd took up when he became prime minister two years ago.

[Lobbyists rev up over U.S. agenda](#)

Energy and natural resource interests, bracing for Senate action on a comprehensive energy and climate change bill, spent \$125.5 million during the first quarter — or nearly a 30% jump over what the industry spent on lobbying during the same period last year. The legislation is aimed at slowing global warming by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.

The Edison Electric Institute, a utility trade group, dramatically increased spending, reporting \$4.2 million on first-quarter lobbying expenses, federal records show. That's a 63% increase over the amount the association spent during the same period in 2009.

"Climate change has been a major investment in time for us and our customers," said Jim Owen, a spokesman for the institute. The group is scrambling to ensure utilities would receive free pollution credits to emit greenhouse gases under proposed legislation, rather than bid on them in an auction. Owen said the savings would be passed on to customers.

[EPA Scientist Says East Coast Beaches Threatened by Sea Level, But Nobody's Listening](#)

For nearly 30 years, Titus has been sounding the alarm about our rising oceans. Global warming is melting polar ice, adding to the volume of the oceans, as well as warming up seawater, causing it to expand. Most climatologists expect oceans around the world to rise between 1.5 and 5 feet this century.

Some of the hardest-hit areas could be in our own backyard: Erosion and a shift in ocean currents could cause water to rise 4 feet or more along much of the East Coast. Titus, who contributed to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Nobel Prize-winning 2007 report, has done more than anyone to determine how those rising seas will affect us and what can be done about them.

Like his occasional collaborator, NASA climatologist James Hansen, Titus has decided to speak out. He's crisscrossed the country to meet with state and local officials in coastal areas, urging them to start planning now for the slow-motion flood. Yet his warnings have mostly fallen on deaf ears. "We were often told by midlevel officials that their bosses did not want to plan for anything past the next election," he says.



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