



## Drumbeat: June 29, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on June 29, 2010 - 9:20am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Apocalypse later](#): *Ray Kurzweil predicts the not-so-near future in 'post-biological' visions of humanity*

NEW YORK — I have seen the future, and it is long-winded, narcissistic, and — thank heavens — still far off.

“Welcome to the future,” was how the emcee greeted me and about 400 guests attending the New York premiere of Ray Kurzweil’s forthcoming movie, “The Singularity Is Near.”

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ion’s total current gas output from onshore fields.

If Abu Dhabi, the nation’s main producer, had not pledged most of its offshore gas output to supply Asian customers under long-term contracts for liquefied natural gas, that might not be so serious. But according to Mr Fesharaki, the UAE, along with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman, is “out of gas”. If it used all the gas it will need to maintain oil production, then it would fall short of gas for power generation and industry.

[Gulf gas sector must see the light to exit dark age](#)

When even the ministry of electricity and water suffers a blackout, you know there is a problem.

As Kuwait’s grid reached 99 per cent of capacity recently, fires broke out in transformers and working hours were cut.

It is not only Kuwait that is suffering. Recent weeks have brought nothing but bad news for the Gulf’s gas and power sector: not just isolated incidents but a sign something is

badly wrong.

### [US set to be big buyer of gas from Middle East](#)

The US will emerge as the second-biggest market for Middle Eastern natural gas exports in two decades if a uniform global market for gas continues to develop, according to a new study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

The forecast counters the prevailing view in the gas industry that the recent spike in US domestic output could permanently close the door to large-scale imports. Multibillion-dollar US import terminals for liquefied natural gas (LNG) are sitting dormant while Qatar, Algeria and other major exporters scramble to find alternative markets willing to pay higher prices.

### [Natural Gas as Panacea: Dubious Path to a Green Future](#)

Many energy experts contend natural gas is the ideal fuel as the world makes the transition to renewable energy. But since much of that gas will come from underground shale, potentially at high environmental cost, it would be far better to skip the natural gas phase and move straight to massive deployment of solar and wind power.

### [X Prize's multimillion-dollar challenge for Gulf oil solutions](#)

The X Prize Foundation announced today that it is developing a multimillion-dollar "oil spill cleanup X challenge" to come up with solutions to cleaning up shorelines and open water fouled by oil leaking from the BP Deepwater Horizon rig in the Gulf of Mexico.

### [Avertible catastrophe](#)

Some are attuned to the possibility of looming catastrophe and know how to head it off. Others are unprepared for risk and even unable to get their priorities straight when risk turns to reality.

The Dutch fall into the first group. Three days after the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico began on April 20, the Netherlands offered the U.S. government ships equipped to handle a major spill, one much larger than the BP spill that then appeared to be underway. "Our system can handle 400 cubic metres per hour," Weird Koops, the chairman of Spill Response Group Holland, told Radio Netherlands Worldwide, giving each Dutch ship more cleanup capacity than all the ships that the U.S. was then employing in the Gulf to combat the spill.

To protect against the possibility that its equipment wouldn't capture all the oil gushing from the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, the Dutch also offered to prepare for the U.S. a

contingency plan to protect Louisiana's marshlands with sand barriers. One Dutch research institute specializing in deltas, coastal areas and rivers, in fact, developed a strategy to begin building 60-mile-long sand dikes within three weeks.

### [Oil Chiefs Leave Meeting with Interior 'Disappointed'](#)

Executives from oil and gas companies on Monday concluded an hour-long meeting with U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar without securing promises from the government to lift a deepwater-drilling moratorium imposed after a disastrous BP oil spill.

### [BP chief calls for considered response to Gulf blame](#)

The managing director of BP North Sea told his staff yesterday that a rushed judgment on who was to blame for the Gulf of Mexico oil spill would help no one.

### [Expanding deepwater drilling was BP's top priority](#)

WASHINGTON: BP staked its future on expanding offshore drilling a month before the catastrophic explosion on the Deepwater Horizon triggered the United States's worst environmental disaster, according to company documents revealed this week.

The website *ProPublica* published a March 2010 strategy document in which BP named "expanding deepwater" as its number one area for long-term growth.

### [McCain Introduces Bill to Repeal Jones Act](#)

Last Friday, U.S. Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) introduced the "Open America's Water Act," which would repeal the Jones Act. McCain's statement follows:

"Today I am pleased to introduce legislation that would fully repeal the Jones Act, a 1920s law that hinders free trade and favors labor unions over consumers. Specifically, the Jones Act requires that all goods shipped between waterborne ports of the United States be carried by vessels built in the United States and owned and operated by Americans. This restriction only serves to raise shipping costs, thereby making U.S. farmers less competitive and increasing costs for American consumers."

### [France's Total to stop gasoline shipments to Iran](#)

PARIS—France's Foreign Ministry has praised the decision by French oil giant Total SA to cease gasoline exports to Iran because of increased international sanctions over its

nuclear program.

### [Joint conclusion of the EU-OPEC Energy Dialogue](#)

During his introductory keynote speech, the EC Commissioner for Energy, Günther Oettinger, highlighted the need for the EU to respond in a compelling manner to those European citizens who felt uncertain or threatened by oil production activities in EU waters. The best answer to these rightful concerns was, he said, to openly discuss all relevant factors, and express the will to take all necessary measures to improve safety. This is what the Commission, the European Parliament and EU Member States were doing currently. To ensure the highest quality of actions taken, the EC considers that close cooperation with all relevant partners is a crucial factor. In this connection, the Commission is proposing to organize a joint EU-OPEC roundtable with the aim of exchanging views on this crucial matter.

### [An ignored sector](#)

Instead of inflationary spikes, it is the decrease in per capita output in the agriculture sector that ought to worry policymakers.

### [Interview with Jeff Rubin, Part 2](#)

*POR: Is there a growing number of economists who are getting the resource depletion story, or is it still business as usual?*

Rubin: I think more economists are coming around. I can just see that from the number of economists who respond to my blog. I think what's happening is that economists are beginning to realize that, yes, the supply curve-meaning, the higher the price of oil, the more oil we'll find-has a big problem in that much of the new oil that we'll find, like tar sands or deep water, we won't be able to afford to burn. Economists' responses will be that \$150 oil will give us new forms of supply but that those prices will send a lot of motorists to the sidelines. Sure, we can produce 4 or 5 million barrels a day out of the Athabasca tar sands or Venezuela's heavy oil, but the prices to produce it translate into \$7-a-gallon gasoline. Can we really afford to burn that? They are starting to understand that depletion is more an economic term than a geologic term because we not going to hit the absolute limit of oil supply; as we're keep drilling towards the bottom of the barrel, it's going to get too expensive to bring out what's left.

### [Live Dangerously: 10 Easy Steps](#)

When Shannon Hayes made a list of easy steps for becoming a radical homemaker, she didn't realize just how revolutionary they were.

## [Redesigning Civilization after the Stress Tests](#)

The BP oil gusher should remind us that our civilization relies on unseen, not very well understood forces, especially energy and the environment, for our day-to-day economies.

Our institutions and communities have recently failed stress tests that pushed system designs beyond intended limits: whether it's toxic exurban real estate assets, climate-altering pollution or deepwater oil drilling.

## [Jan Lundberg: The End Of Oil, And Government](#)

The unsustainable U.S. economy and coast-to-coast consumer society that uses more oil than any other nation will keep up its energy gluttony until supplies give out.

Because oil is the most critical part of our energy mix, and it supplies critical materials and chemicals besides fuels, a sudden, crippling oil shortage can paralyze most of the work, commerce and law enforcement going on in this country. Activities such as driving to church or to the beach to clean oil off dying birds will also mostly cease virtually overnight.

## [The Population-Poverty Connection By Lester R. Brown](#)

The 21st century began on an inspiring note: the United Nations set a goal of reducing the share of the world's population living in extreme poverty by half by 2015.

By early 2007 the world looked to be on track to meet this goal, but as the economic crisis unfolds and the outlook darkens, the world will have to intensify its poverty reduction effort.

## [Imagining a World Without Oil](#)

The current issue of Scientific American puts the BP oil spill into global perspective. It perhaps explains why the public seems to be more concerned about the impacts than the government, members of Congress, and those in the oil industry and those who support offshore oil drilling.

[Apocalypse later: Ray Kurzweil predicts the not-so-near future in 'post-biological' visions of humanity](#)

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heavens — still far off.

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### [Government-ordered biofuels inviting a water crisis, Nestle chairman warns](#)

EDMONTON - Governments that impose biofuels regulations as a remedy for CO2 emissions are doing more harm than good, the chairman of Nestle SA said Monday.

To meet the 20-per-cent biofuel requirement in gasoline and diesel that some governments have set, food production would have to triple right away, and that's impossible, said Peter Brabeck-Letmathe.

### [Nuclear energy the answer?](#)

It seems odd at first sight to understand why Pakistan, a country that can make nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and has an atomic energy commission that employs over 30,000 people, has electricity blackouts.

### [Iraqi Energy Protests Grow](#)

The interim Iraqi government is reeling from riots and demonstrations that have erupted across the country to protest severe electricity shortages.

Anger has been growing for weeks over the continued power cuts and rising fuel prices - resulting from the demand for generators - and the stalled efforts to form a new government.

### [NOC curtails oil imports](#)

KATHMANDU: Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC), which is reeling under oil loss, has resorted to pressure tactics and sharply cut the import of petroleum products in a bid to

exert pressure on the government to adjust fuel prices.

### [Pakistan: Shutter down at 8p.m. frustrating buyers, sellers alike](#)

“We have won democracy after a prolonged struggle against dictatorship. We now expect the government to offer us some relief rather than imposing dictatorial decisions like shutter down at 8 p.m., which has inflicted losses to the tune of 80% to my business,” complains Izhar Khan of ‘Fashion Affairs.’

### [Oil Drops Most in Three Weeks on Forecast China Growth Slowing](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Crude oil fell the most in more than three weeks amid concern that the economy in China, the world's fastest-growing energy consumer, is expanding at a slower pace than previously estimated, lessening its need for fuels.

Oil lost as much as 3.8 percent as the Conference Board corrected its April gauge for the outlook on China's economy, saying it rose by the smallest amount since November. Equity markets declined and the dollar strengthened against the euro, curbing the appeal of commodities as an alternative investment.

### [Iran-Pakistan pipeline boon for region](#)

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (UPI) -- A planned natural gas pipeline from the South Pars gas field in Iran will help Pakistan find relief for a looming energy crisis, an Iranian envoy said.

First deliveries of natural gas through the pipeline are expected in Pakistan by 2015. Islamabad has contracted 750,000 cubic feet of gas per day through the pipeline under the terms of the 25-year deal.

### [Which oil companies are more eco-friendly than the rest?](#)

Back in April, a reader asked which gas station was the most eco-friendly choice, and BP came out pretty high on the Lantern's list. We don't need to crunch the numbers again to know that the company formerly known as "Beyond Petroleum" has gone from hero to zero with a series of preventable missteps that led to the spilling of as much as 179 million gallons of crude into the Gulf of Mexico. The Deepwater Horizon blowout now threatens our coastline and fisheries in what President Obama called a "massive, unprecedented environmental disaster."

### [Bill McKibben: Oil Spill Is an Opportunity for Americans](#)

The spill presents an opportunity for Americans to demand better leadership on energy and the environment, and to become leaders themselves, says McKibben, a best-selling author. "This is one of the moments when we're offered an opportunity to really see what's going on in the world," McKibben says. The fact that the Deepwater Horizon rig was seeking oil more than a mile below the ocean floor means we're running out of oil, he argues. "Even if that oil made it safely to shore and got burned in the gas tanks of our cars, it would be an environmental catastrophe," McKibben adds, noting that we have just lived through the 12 warmest months on record.

Here's Bill McKibben on how each of us can take part in leading America into a sustainable energy future.

### [Exxon, Shell May Consider Possible Bid for BP, JPMorgan Says](#)

Exxon Mobil Corp. and Royal Dutch Shell Plc may consider bidding for BP Plc after the London-based oil company lost more than half of its market value in the wake of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, JPMorgan Cazenove Ltd. said.

Exxon Mobil has the stronger balance sheet and proven ability to integrate a large transaction, according to Fred Lucas, a London-based analyst at JP Morgan. It could make a cash and share offer, valuing BP at 473 pence a share compared with yesterday's close of 308.25 pence, and including a \$50 billion spin-off of BP's downstream assets, according to JPMorgan.

### [Senior US energy official says 'tragic' Gulf oil spill underscores need to shift to renewables](#)

(AP) — A senior American energy official says the oil gushing in the Gulf of Mexico dramatically illustrates the need for investing in renewable sources of energy.

David Sandalow, an assistant energy secretary, said Tuesday the oil spill is a "tragic situation" that "underscores the need for a transition to a clean energy economy."

### [Alaska senator defends BP project in state](#)

JUNEAU, Alaska -- Sen. Mark Begich is defending a BP oil project off Alaska's coast as a state-of-the-art model that should not be halted because of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

The Alaska Democrat responded Monday to a request by Sen. Frank Lautenberg, a New Jersey Democrat who asked federal officials to halt the project pending an investigation of the Gulf spill, a new review of the Alaska project and implementation of revised drilling rules and regulations.



## [Gulf disaster's psychological effects are quietly taking their toll](#)

NEW ORLEANS — The Gulf of Mexico oil disaster feels far worse to shrimper Ricky Robin than Katrina, even though he's still haunted by memories of riding out the hurricane on his trawler and of his father's suicide in the storm's aftermath.

The relentless spill is bringing back feelings that are far too familiar to Robin and others still dealing with the physical and emotional toll wrought by Katrina five years ago.

## [Swiss firm has plan to save coastlines from oil](#)

Yards of unassuming white fabric made by a Swiss company may be just the technology needed to help clean up the Gulf of Mexico's oil-drenched coastlines.

HeiQ, which makes the coatings to render synthetic fabrics odour-free for leisure clothing companies like Mammut and Puma, has developed a fleece that can absorb oil in water.

## [In Ireland, a Picture of the High Cost of Austerity](#)

David Stronge returned to Dublin in 2006 from an architecture job in Britain. "I wanted to come back here and get a piece of this action," he said. "And I did for about a year. But then it started to tank."

He moved to reinvent himself, returning to school with thousands of other Irish, in hopes that a higher degree would lead to better prospects. Mr. Stronge plans to seek alternative energy jobs in Britain once he gets his master's degree in August.

"Ireland isn't going to spend on infrastructure probably for another 10 to 15 years," he said. "So you have to go to where the opportunities are."

## [Kuwait looks to boost output](#)

State-run Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) chief executive, Sami Rushaid said the country will raise production from its northern oilfields to 820,000 barrels per day by the end of July.

Rushaid told the Seyassah daily that current production from the fields stood at 720,000 bpd.

Kuwait's total production capacity is expected to reach 3.3 million bpd in August, Rushaid said, reiterating the country's current capacity was at 3.17 million bpd.

The world's fourth-largest oil exporter is aiming to reach a capacity of 4 million bpd in 2020.

### [Oil tumbles below \\$77 as hurricane fears ease](#)

SINGAPORE – Oil prices tumbled below \$77 a barrel Tuesday in Asia on signs Tropical Storm Alex would likely miss most of the rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, leaving supplies undisrupted.

### [Total Has Fire, Explosion at Lindsey Refinery in U.K.](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Total SA said a fire and an explosion occurred at its Lindsey refinery in northwest England, the fourth-largest refinery in the U.K.

### [Egypt tightens security around pipeline for Israel-bound gas](#)

CAIRO (AFP) – Egyptian police beefed up security around a Sinai peninsula pipeline that supplies Israel with natural gas after a group of wanted Bedouin threatened to sabotage it, security officials said on Monday.

The Bedouin group, which consists of at least a dozen armed fugitives, has clashed with police since its leader Salim Lafi escaped from a prison truck in an ambush that killed a policeman in February.

### [Indian Oil Says Scrapping of Fuel Subsidies Helps to Consider Share Sale](#)

India's decision to free gasoline and diesel prices from state control will help in selling shares of Indian Oil Corp., the nation's second-biggest refiner, Chairman B.M. Bansal said.

### [Iraq approves gas deal with Shell](#)

BAGHDAD — Iraq has approved a multibillion-dollar joint venture deal with Royal Dutch Shell PLC to tap associated natural gas in the south of the country.

According to the deal, designed to exploit the gas in three oil fields close to the southern city of Basra, Iraq will hold 51 percent of the venture's shares, Shell 44 percent and Japan's Mitsubishi Corp. 5 percent.

## [Alex to Become Hurricane as Swells Reach Gulf Spill](#)

Tropical Storm Alex, the first named system of the Atlantic hurricane season, strengthened today, forcing the evacuation of rigs in the Gulf of Mexico and pushing swells toward the worst U.S. oil spill.

## [BP Discussing a Backup Strategy to Plug Well](#)

Since shortly after oil began spewing into the Gulf of Mexico two months ago, relief wells have been discussed as the ultimate solution, their success in permanently plugging the runaway well deemed a foregone conclusion.

But BP and government officials are now talking about a long-term containment plan to pump the oil to an existing platform should the relief well effort fail. While such a failure is considered highly unlikely, the contingency plan is the latest sign that with this most vexing of engineering challenges — snuffing a gusher 5,000 feet down in the gulf — nothing is a sure thing.

## [Louisiana Wants U.S. Help, and Its Own Way](#)

NEW ORLEANS — For weeks, Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana has attacked BP and the Coast Guard for not having adequate plans and resources to battle the oil spill.

But interviews with more than two dozen state and federal officials and experts suggest that Louisiana, from the earliest days of the spill in the Gulf of Mexico, has often disregarded its own plans and experts in favor of large-scale proposals that many say would probably have had limited effectiveness and could have even hampered the response.

## [BP Chief Executive Hayward Has Full Backing of Board, Refining Head Says](#)

BP Plc Chief Executive Officer Tony Hayward has the backing of the board and is not about to resign, according to Iain Conn, the oil company's head of refining and marketing.

## [US lawmakers demand major oil firms' emergency plans](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Senior US lawmakers on Monday pressed oil giants Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil and Shell to prove they are better prepared than BP was in the Gulf of Mexico to confront a massive oil spill.

"No oil company appears to be better prepared for a disastrous oil spill than BP was," House Energy and Commerce Committee chairman Henry Waxman and the chairmen of

two subcommittees wrote in letter to top executives at each firm.

### [New York Fed probes Wall Street exposure to BP: sources](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) – The Federal Reserve Bank of New York has been probing major financial firms' exposure to BP Plc to ensure that if the oil giant buckles under the costs of the Gulf oil spill, it won't put Wall Street or the global financial system at risk, according to two sources familiar with the matter.

After poring over documents and asking banks about their exposure to BP over the past two weeks, the Fed found no systemic risk, and hasn't asked firms to alter their credit relationships with BP, the sources told Reuters.

### [BP Loses Trading-Floor Swagger in Energy Markets](#)

There are already signs that trading partners are becoming wary of BP's financial outlook; one market participant, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, is halting long-term contracts with BP. The company's deteriorating credit rating — on June 15, it was downgraded by Fitch to one notch above junk bonds — makes it harder for traders to cheaply deploy vast amounts of cash. And with its stock down by more than half since the blowout in the gulf, BP can only watch as rival firms try to poach its best traders.

“A lot of the swagger comes from the amount of money they have to trade with,” said Craig Pirrong, a director at the University of Houston's Global Energy Management Institute. “And traders realize they don't have the capital they had just a couple of weeks ago.”

### [Lloyd's recalls energy policies](#)

Lloyd's director of performance management Tom Bolt has demanded members intending to write energy policies in 2011 resubmit their plans in the wake of the BP/Transocean Deepwater Horizon accident, the Telegraph reports.

Lloyd's regulators believe rates will have to rise by multiples of present levels, the paper says.

### [Caspian countries to sign memorandum to regulate offshore oil exploitation](#)

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan and Iran will sign a document to regulate offshore oil exploitation and protect environment at the Caspian Sea, said a Kazakh official.

In view of the serious consequences of the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, Caspian countries should produce a document to clearly define the responsibility of each country in case of an offshore accident, Kazakh Environment Minister Nurgali Ashimov told the country's lower house of parliament.

### [New Orleans Chef on Her Lawsuit Against BP: "I Am Just Angry"](#)

Ms. Spicer, long a respected New Orleans chef, spent most of Monday huddled with her lawyers, trying to map out a strategy after word got out that she was suing BP and several other companies on behalf of Gulf restaurant owners and seafood suppliers.

"I just hope that my motivations will not be misinterpreted," she said from her restaurant Bayona in her first interview since the suit was filed Friday. "It's more about solidarity in this region than about getting my piece of the pie. I can't say I expect to see a dollar out of this thing. I am just angry."

### [FSA fines and bans drunk oil broker](#)

LONDON (Reuters) – The financial regulator has fined and banned a former PVM Oil Futures Ltd. broker for manipulating the price of oil last year by the unauthorised purchase of more than 7 million barrels while drunk.

### [Looking at Chemicals Used in Hydrofracking](#)

Compounds associated with neurological problems or other serious health effects are among the chemicals being used to drill natural gas wells in Pennsylvania.

The Associated Press has obtained a list that state Environmental Protection officials say they hope to post online soon.

It is believed to be the first complete catalog of drilling chemicals used in Pennsylvania, where the rapidly growing industry is pursuing the Marcellus Shale formation.

### [Wind Could Supply 25% of Germany's Power Needs as Nuclear Plants Retired](#)

Germany can generate 25 percent of its electricity from wind by 2020 if the government sticks to its plan of phasing out nuclear power, the nation's wind industry lobby group said.

Wind turbines onshore may reach 45,000 megawatts of installed power capacity, while offshore equipment will provide another 10,000 megawatts a decade from now, BWE said today in an e-mailed statement.

### [Is a New Reactor Rust-Prone?](#)

Approval of the design for the Westinghouse AP 1000 reactor is slowly moving forward at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, as are financial arrangements for building the nation's first one, near Augusta, Ga. Yet the argument about whether its design is safer than past models is advancing, too.

### [U.S. Allocates as Much as \\$24 Million in Grants for Algae Biofuel Projects](#)

(Bloomberg New Energy Finance) -- The U.S. Department of Energy will award as much as \$24 million in new grants to three research projects aimed at commercializing biofuels derived from algae.

The projects will be carried out by three groups that include partners from academia, national laboratories and private companies, according to a statement from the department.

### [Comtec Solar to Delay June Target to More Than Double Production Capacity](#)

(Bloomberg New Energy Finance) -- Comtec Solar System Group Ltd., a Chinese solar ingot and wafer manufacturer, said a plan to more than double production capacity by June has been delayed.

### [Investors grab Tesla Motors IPO](#)

PayPal founder Elon Musk's seven-year old auto company lost \$55.7 million last year and \$260.7 million since its inception. The company has performed so poorly from a financial standpoint that Musk recently said he lost his entire personal fortune on Tesla.

But investors are giddy about the Palo Alto, Calif.-based automaker's initial public offering, prompting Tesla on Monday to increase the number of shares it plans to offer by nearly a fifth to 13.3 million.

### [Daikin Industries Plans to Build 'Zero-Energy' Office Building in Germany](#)

(Bloomberg New Energy Finance) -- Daikin Europe, a unit of Japanese air conditioner maker Daikin Industries Ltd., will build a "zero-energy" office building as part of a project to test low-carbon, energy-efficient technology.

## [The State's Green Ways Are Under Attack](#)

Even with a Republican, Arnold Schwarzenegger, sitting in the governor's chair, California has pushed hard on the environmental front, especially with the 2006 passage of AB 32, an ambitious effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the state.

In this context, it comes as a bit of a shock to see an effort to undo AB 32 gaining traction. A November ballot initiative would suspend the law until the state's unemployment rate — currently at 12.4 percent — drops to 5.5 percent or less for an extended period.

## [The unintended consequences of a plastic bag ban](#)

Jobs would be in jeopardy, and more consumers would switch to environmentally unfriendly paper bags.

## [Electrolux to make vacuums from plastic ocean trash](#)

Electrolux, the world's second largest home appliance maker, said on Tuesday it will harvest bit of plastic from floating garbage islands in the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans, as well as from three European seas, and use the material to manufacture six showcase vacuum cleaners.

## [What is a Malthusian catastrophe?](#)

A Malthusian catastrophe is an event which results from a period of unchecked population growth, according to the theory of overpopulation advanced by Enlightenment demographer Thomas Robert Malthus (and subsequently applied to "peak oil" and other conceptually similar subjects). According to Malthus, a population grows regularly, or geometrically, until it reaches a peak level at which it cannot hope to sustain itself, and then collapses in a cataclysmic event known as a "Malthusian catastrophe."

## [Urban Gardening, Part 1: The Hydroponic Lab on the Roof](#)

In densely populated metro areas, any space that's suitable for gardening is probably also very attractive to developers looking to build structures on it instead. However, some city dwellers with persevering green thumbs have looked skyward, using the latest in hydroponic technology to put vegetable gardens on rooftops.

*Part 2 is [here](#).*

### [Toxic Mercury Is More at Home in Seawater, Study Finds](#)

Now a new study suggests that humans need to be more wary of saltwater fish like tuna, mackerel and sharks than of freshwater fish. Although seawater has lower concentrations of mercury than freshwater, mercury in seawater is more likely to stay in its toxic form, researchers report in a recent issue of Nature Geoscience.

### [FDA vs. antibiotics for animal growth](#)

The Food and Drug Administration issued a document Monday stating that antibiotics important for human health shouldn't be used to help animals grow faster. Officials say it's the beginning of a process to halt their use in meat production. But critics say the agency has made similar statements before, yet nothing came of it.

### [At German Airports, Bees Help Monitor Air Quality](#)

Airports in Germany have come up with an unusual approach to monitoring air quality. The Düsseldorf International Airport and seven other airports are using bees as "biodeTECTIVES," their honey regularly tested for toxins.

### [German, KfW Development Bank Climate Fund to Reach \\$500 Million by 2011](#)

A fund supported by Germany's KfW development bank that aims to invest in energy efficient projects in developing nations will likely have financing sources worth \$500 million by the end of the year.

### [Switzerland donates USD 230 mln for international environmental and climate policy](#)

BERNE (KUNA) -- The Swiss Federal Council decided in its weekly meeting to support the international environmental and climate policy by USD 230 million according to the UN Climate Summit 2009 resolution. According to a press release from the Swiss federal Council "the state of the environment has deteriorated in the last few years. Human activities lead to climate change, the increase of extinction and the disappearance of the natural habitats. The effects were already apparent "in 1998 for the first time more are registered refugees from environmental disasters than war refugees." "Despite the economic crisis, the international community has also decided to strengthen the overall environment and to increase funding for the Global Environment Fund by 50 percent.", added the press release.

### [Greg Barker, climate change minister: 'We cannot go on relying on foreign fuel'](#)

The 43-year-old believes Britain could become the "Saudi Arabia of renewable energy"



by investing in offshore wind, wave and tidal sources. In the Budget, the Coalition pledged to set up a Green Investment Bank to help finance renewable power stations, and Barker has ambitious plans to make London “the world hub of green finance”, creating “green ISAs and pensions” so that the public can invest in, and benefit from, the massive growth in the clean energy industry.

### [Households paying £84 in hidden climate taxes](#)

HOUSEHOLDS are typically being charged more than £80 a year in hidden taxes to help combat the impact of climate change, research suggested today.

### [Green power an easy win for Australia: scientists](#)

(Reuters) - Australia's new leader should ramp up renewable energy use and enshrine tougher energy efficiency standards to fight global warming, leading climate scientists said on Tuesday, describing them as easy policy wins.

### [Gillard wants carbon trading scheme, says Wong](#)

Prime Minister Julia Gillard is strongly committed to putting a price on carbon, her climate change minister has said at a major climate summit.

### [Arab Nations May Be Waking Up Too Late to Climate Change](#)

While Israel is already racing to put water-saving measures in place to meet the challenge of a world with less water, such as desalination plants and specialized targeted drip irrigation agricultural systems, Arab neighbors are only now becoming aware of just how severe the blow will be when the crisis fully hits the region.

### [Britain needs \\$15 billion "green bank": report](#)

(Reuters) - Britain needs a green bank to meet its 2020 goals to slash carbon emissions and curb use of fossil fuels, a report commissioned by the Conservative Party said on Tuesday.

### [When the Day After Tomorrow Has Come](#)

Imagine that it is 2050 — or even 2020 — and you are the president. Your science adviser has brought you alarming news: Greenland’s inland ice sheets are melting so fast that sea levels are about to rise dramatically. Moreover, thawing Arctic permafrost is about to pour huge quantities of heat-trapping methane gas into the atmosphere,

which will make the already roasting planet even hotter.

The crisis, your adviser tells you, is now.

What can you do?

Quite a bit, to hear some researchers tell it. They say it should be possible to “geoengineer” the planet to cool its increasingly raging greenhouse fever. But they say these possibilities must be tested now, so that when the world needs to act, the scientific community can offer responsible advice. Their ideas are the subject of a new book, “Hack the Planet,” by Eli Kintisch, a reporter for the journal Science.

### ['Carbon storage' faces leak dilemma - study](#)

PARIS — Dreams of braking global warming by storing carbon emissions from power plants could be undermined by the risk of leakage, according to a study published on Sunday.

### [More refugees to come unless rich nations help poor with climate change: UN scientist](#)

MORE refugees will knock on Australia's door unless rich countries help poorer nations cope with climate change, a key UN scientist has warned.

Professor Martin Parry - a prominent UK scientist who chaired the last United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment of the impact of climate change - said wealthy countries such as Australia had “good, selfish reasons” to spend money helping the developing world adapt to global warming.

### [Scientists 'expect climate tipping point' by 2200](#)

The global climate is more than likely to slip into an unpredictable state with unknown consequences for human societies if carbon dioxide emissions continue on their present course, a survey of leading climate scientists has found.

Almost all of the leading researchers who took part in a detailed analysis of their expert opinion believe that high levels of greenhouse gases will cause a fundamental shift in the global climate system – a tipping point – with potentially far-reaching consequences.



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