



## Drumbeat: August 6, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on August 6, 2010 - 9:19am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [China: Energy-intensive firms lose electricity aid](#)

BEIJING: Preferential electricity rates granted by 22 provincial governments for high energy-consuming businesses have been totally scrapped, China's top economic planner announced Friday.

All energy-intensive enterprises must be subject to the new power tariff surcharges introduced in May, said the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) in a statement posted on its website.

The news comes three days after Chinese statistics authorities said China's consumption of energy relative to economic output rose in the first half by 0.09 percent from the same period last year.

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### [Crude Falls as U.S. Jobs Report Raises Concern Economic Growth Is Slowing](#)

Crude oil fell for a third day as weaker-than-forecast growth in U.S. company payrolls bolstered concern that economic growth in the world's biggest oil-consuming country is slowing.

Oil slipped as much as 2.4 percent after the Labor Department said private payrolls that exclude government agencies rose by 71,000, less than forecast, after a gain of 31,000 in June that was smaller than previously reported. A government report on Aug. 4 showed that U.S. fuel supplies rose last week as demand fell.

### [Southwestern Energy Says Dry Weather May Slow Pennsylvania Shale-Gas Work](#)

Southwestern Energy Co., the largest natural-gas producer in the Fayetteville Shale of Arkansas, said development of the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania may be slowed if dry weather continues the next few months.

The dry weather means less water is available from the nearby streams for use in the

process known as hydraulic fracturing, Steven Mueller, chief executive officer at Houston-based Southwestern, told investors today on a conference call.

### [Pakistan: Floods threaten plants](#)

MULTAN (Pakistan) - MASSIVE flooding in Pakistan has threatened electricity generation plants, forcing units to shut down in a country suffering from a crippling energy crisis, officials said on Friday.

### [Electric Car Firm Pulls The Plug](#)

Barry Bernstein tried to launch a battery electric car company, but says he didn't have the right friends in Washington.

### [Food shortage may spark violence in Pakistan: report](#)

WASHINGTON: About 77 million people go hungry in Pakistan while 36 per cent of the population are afflicted by poverty, says a new report released on Wednesday.

“From small farmers to the urban masses and internally displaced persons, millions of Pakistanis are affected by the scourge of food insecurity,” warns the report by the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington.

The report notes that while the global food crisis subsided in 2009, Pakistan continues to suffer from an acute food shortage.

### [Wheat hits loss limit after rally on Russia export halt](#)

Manitoba (Reuters) - Wheat markets tumbled the daily limit on Friday, posting their biggest daily percentage loss in 14 months as investors took profits a day after pushing prices higher with Russia suspending grain shipments due to its worst drought in a century.

### [South Africa Increases Coal Exports to India by 74% in July, Trader Says](#)

South Africa's Richards Bay, the continent's largest coal terminal, increased sales to India by 74 percent in July from June, according to a trader.

Purchases rose to 2.1 million metric tons, according to a note yesterday by mjunction Services Ltd., a web-based trader backed by India's biggest steel producers. Purchases climbed 52 percent from a year earlier. Imports in the first seven months rose 14

percent to 11.63 million tons.

### [No Gain From Rain for Indonesia Coal as China Demand Cools](#)

The heaviest rainfall in seven years in Indonesia, the world's second-biggest coal exporter, is failing to stoke price gains as Chinese demand cools.

### [Scientists Forecast 9 More Atlantic Hurricanes](#)

The forecast for the 2010 Atlantic hurricane season calls for nine more hurricanes by November, including five major ones with winds topping 178 kilometers (110 miles) per hour, a Colorado State University study said Wednesday.

### [U.S., Vietnam Hold Nuclear Technology Talks as Suitors Vie for Contracts](#)

The U.S. and Vietnam are holding negotiations on sharing nuclear fuel and civilian nuclear technology, an agreement that will enable American companies to invest in the Southeast Asian country's atomic industry.

### [Turning a Crisis Into an Opportunity](#)

Now that the country's worst oil spill in history has finally been stopped, expect a gusher of political debate over what it meant and whom to blame. For three months, Mr. Obama was tested in a way he had not been before, his seemingly detached initial response to the crisis evolving into a tougher approach to face down a multinational corporation.

### [Don't double tax oil and gas industry](#)

Kansas has a vibrant and thriving petroleum industry. Since the first commercial sales of natural gas from the Hugoton Field in 1928, oil and gas have been important to the people of this state. It is for this reason that the Obama administration's move to impose a double tax on the oil and gas industry is all the more troubling.

The United States is alone among its peers in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in taxing its corporations on their worldwide income. Most nations, in contrast, tax their corporations only on the income they earn in their home county. But if you're a U.S. company, wherever on this planet you make a dime, Uncle Sam is going to get his cut.

### [These Days, Carville Praises Oil Spill Response](#)

James Carville, the outspoken Democratic political strategist and television pundit, has sent what amounts to a very public kiss-and-make-up note to his friends in the White House, praising President Obama's recent handling of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

### [A Looming Oxygen Crisis and Its Impact on World's Oceans](#)

As warming intensifies, scientists warn, the oxygen content of oceans across the planet could be more and more diminished, with serious consequences for the future of fish and other sea life.

### [Appeal of bikes broadens, but riding remains risky in Syracuse](#)

Cyclist Neil Hueber saw the interest in bikes spike when gas prices hit \$4 a gallon. While many of those looking for cheap transportation have found current fuel prices more palatable and slipped back into the driver's seat, bikes continue to appeal to students.

They're cheap to buy and even less expensive to maintain -- no insurance, no fuel, no parking costs.

### [New Ways to Scrub Out the Carbon](#)

Three technologies lead the pack for capturing the carbon dioxide in coal while also harnessing the energy. On Thursday, the Energy Department endorsed the "oxyburn" strategy, which involves filtering the nitrogen out of air and burning coal in pure oxygen, with a resulting flue gas that is almost pure carbon dioxide; it will attempt that in Illinois.

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### [Chevron wins bid for Canada Arctic rights](#)

Chevron has bought an exploration licence for the Beaufort Sea in Canada's Far North, bidding C\$103.3 million (\$101 million) as the country gets set to review offshore drilling following the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

### [Valero enters into talks to sell Paulsboro refinery](#)

(Reuters) - Valero Energy Corp said on Friday it had entered into negotiations to sell its 195,000 barrel per day refinery in Paulsboro, New Jersey.

### [Some manufacturing heads back to USA](#)

There are myriad reasons for the shifts, often called "onshoring" or "reshoring." Chinese wages and shipping costs have risen sharply in the past few years while U.S. salaries have stayed flat, or in some cases, fallen in the recession. Meanwhile, U.S. manufacturers have been frustrated by the sometimes poor quality of goods made by foreign contractors, theft of their intellectual property and long product-delivery cycles that make them less responsive to customer demand.

### [Chinese missile could shift Pacific power balance](#)

ABOARD THE USS GEORGE WASHINGTON – Nothing projects U.S. global air and sea power more vividly than supercarriers. Bristling with fighter jets that can reach deep into even landlocked trouble zones, America's virtually invincible carrier fleet has long enforced its dominance of the high seas.

China may soon put an end to that.

U.S. naval planners are scrambling to deal with what analysts say is a game-changing weapon being developed by China – an unprecedented carrier-killing missile called the Dong Feng 21D that could be launched from land with enough accuracy to penetrate the defenses of even the most advanced moving aircraft carrier at a distance of more than 1,500 kilometers (900 miles).

### [BP says it might drill again in spill reservoir](#)

NEW ORLEANS — BP PLC said Friday it might someday drill again into the same lucrative undersea pocket of oil that spilled millions of gallons of crude, wrecked livelihoods and fouled beaches along the Gulf of Mexico.

"There's lots of oil and gas here," Chief Operating Officer Doug Suttles said at a news

briefing. "We're going to have to think about what to do with that at some point."

### [The BP spill is already gone and forgotten](#)

FORTUNE -- BP's Deepwater Horizon disaster may have drawn more public attention than any other oil spill, but there's a good chance that sordid history of spill cleanup efforts will repeat itself. That history is to bomb the crude with chemicals so it's out sight, then place the incident out of mind once the slick appears to be gone.

### [After the spill: What's been learned?](#)

As the crisis ebbs and emotions calm, it's time to begin looking back to ask what lessons have been learned, what should have been done differently, what there still is to worry about — and how things might go differently next time. Some fresh insights are beginning to emerge:

### [A 'Small' Spill: China's Environmental Tango](#)

Not long after taking up work in Beijing, I ran across an interesting chart that, reduced to a nutshell, says this: when Beijing's air is bad, the government tweaks things to make its pollution reports look better than they really are.

Pig-lipsticking, of course, is anything but a Chinese invention, but on Chinese environmental matters, it has long been something of an art. Consider November 2005, when Harbin's city government announced that it was shutting down the city water supply for four days of maintenance. (The real reason: a 100-ton slug of benzene was floating down the Songhua River past water-intake pipes.) Or last August, when, after 166 children in a Shaanxi Province town were hospitalized with lead poisoning, the city authorities issued a statement saying the local lead smelter met all national environmental standards.

### [Poverty and Lack of Research Block Path to a Well-Fed World](#)

I'm catching up with a great package of reports, commentary and analysis in the July 28th edition of the journal Nature on the challenging, but entirely doable, task of feeding roughly 9 billion people by midcentury (and doing so without using up the last patches of arable land). One of the best things about the package is that most of the content is freely accessible, as was the case with an important paper on feeding the world in the competing journal Science in February.

The Nature reports explore the vital role of advancing and disseminating useful agricultural practices and technologies, including but hardly limited to genetically modified crops, but also the simple reality that poverty is the main source of hunger



now, not a lack of food. A central theme is efficiency, getting higher yields on small plots with fewer inputs of water and fertilizer. There's a nice downloadable summary poster of some of the main findings.

### [USA's greenest cities? You might be surprised](#)

A new scorecard picks the 22 greenest U.S. cities, several of which are well-known as eco-friendly such as Portland, San Francisco, Boulder and Seattle. Yet others might surprise you.

Among the top scorers are four cities in Texas as well as Reno, Columbus, Ohio, Springfield, Ill., and Dubuque, Iowa, according to the "2010 Smarter Cities" by the Natural Resources Defense Council's online resource center, [smartercities.org](http://smartercities.org). The rankings are based on energy use per capita, renewable power investments, efficiency efforts and conservation incentives.

### [Greens Debating Tactics Instead of Ideas](#)

In Politco, Darren Samuelsohn has a solid roundup of reflections by environmental campaigners on why, despite spending tens of millions of dollars, they failed to gain the votes for any climate action in the Senate. But the entire discussion is about tactics, not ideas. There are scant signs, yet, that anyone within the Beltway is willing to shift toward attacking the entwined energy and climate challenges as less a 20th-century-style pollution problem and more a 21st-century-style technology and innovation opportunity.

### [China says to maintain trade cooperation with Iran](#)

(Reuters) - Chinese Vice Premier Li Keqiang told the visiting Iranian oil minister on Friday that Beijing would maintain cooperation with Tehran on existing projects, after the United States called on Beijing to observe sanctions.

"Iran is an important trade partner of China's in western Asia and North Africa and one of the country's main oil suppliers. Bilateral economic and trade cooperation has achieved fruitful results," state television paraphrased Li as telling minister Massoud Mirkazemi.

### [Oil Falls Third Day as U.S. Job Loss Forecast Spurs Demand Growth Concern](#)

Crude oil fell for a third day as forecasts that the U.S. lost more jobs last month fanned concern that fuel demand will lag behind supplies.

Futures in New York fell as much as 0.5 percent before a government report that may show a drop of 65,000 jobs in July. Crude may also retreat next week, a Bloomberg survey of analysts showed, reversing a 3.7 percent gain in the past five days.

“Inventories worldwide are at very high levels, and the demand recovery seems to be relatively weak in industrialized countries,” said Eugen Weinberg, head of commodity research at Commerzbank AG in Frankfurt.

### [Crude Oil May Fall as Fuel Stockpiles Increase, Demand Drops, Survey Shows](#)

Crude oil may fall next week on speculation that U.S. fuel inventories will climb as demand declines, a Bloomberg News survey showed.

Twenty-eight of 46 analysts, or 61 percent, forecast crude oil will decline through Aug. 13. It was the most bearish result since July 2009. Twelve respondents, or 26 percent, predicted that futures will increase and six saw little change. Last week 42 percent of analysts forecast a drop.

### [Cambodia to sign cooperation deal with Iran on oil](#)

PHNOM PENH (Reuters) - Officials from Cambodia are to travel to Iran next week and the two countries will sign agreements covering cooperation in the oil sector, the foreign minister of the Southeast Asian state said on Friday.

### [Abu Dhabi aims to become 'leading exporter' of gas](#)

Abu Dhabi has long-term plans to expand its gas exports, an independent study of the emirate's energy sector shows.

The emirate's two big gas projects, the Shah gas and “integrated gas” developments, “will go a long way to meet domestic needs and establish Abu Dhabi as a leading gas exporter through expansion of its gas terminals”, said Gilles Valentin, the editorial director of The Oil and Gas Year Abu Dhabi 2010, released yesterday by Wildcat Publishing in the UK.

### [UAE: Japanese tanker attacked in Persian Gulf](#)

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) -- An explosive-laden dinghy had struck a Japanese oil tanker in the Persian Gulf last month, the Emirati state news agency said Friday, in the first official confirmation that the incident was an attack.



### [Indian Oil May Sell Shares If State Cuts Stake in Refiner to Pare Deficit](#)

Indian Oil Corp., the nation's biggest company, may sell new shares if the government reduces its stake in the state-owned refiner to raise money for social spending and to narrow its budget deficit.

### [Eni Said to Delay India Oil Block Exploration on Rig Shortage, BP Spill](#)

Eni SpA, Italy's largest oil and gas company, may delay exploration of an offshore field in India by at least a year, said two people with knowledge of the plans.

Eni, which owns the Andaman block with Oil & Natural Gas Corp. and Gail India Ltd., is reconsidering the risks of deepwater exploration following the BP Plc accident in the Gulf of Mexico, one of the people said. Difficulties in sourcing a rig may also push back drilling until at least the second half of next year, the people said, asking not to be identified because the matter is confidential.

### [Senate Democrats seek to end Big Oil tax break](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Senate Democrats on Thursday proposed repealing a tax break for some major oil companies, including BP Plc, effective December 31.

### [Pemex Postpones Drilling to Test Deep-Water Equipment](#)

Petroleos Mexicanos, the state-owned oil company, will postpone drilling a well in the Gulf of Mexico that would be its deepest ever while it tries out new equipment in a shallower project, a company executive said.

### [BP looks to relief well to finish kill](#)

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana (AFP) – With its runaway well in the Gulf of Mexico finally plugged with cement, BP turned Friday to a relief well to make sure that the source of the United States' worst environmental disaster is killed for good.

"This is not the end, but it will virtually assure us that there will be no chance of oil leaking into the environment," Thad Allen, in charge of the US response to the spill, said Thursday after BP's Macondo well was plugged.

"I think we can all breathe a little easier," he said.

### [To seal or sell? BP has options on remaining oil](#)

NEW ORLEANS – The vast oil reservoir beneath BP's blown-out well could still be worth billions of dollars even after it spewed crude into the Gulf of Mexico for more than three months - but the multinational company blamed for causing the disaster isn't saying whether it plans to cash in on this potential windfall.

### [BP: Now Come the Fines](#)

BP could face as much as \$17.6 billion in civil penalties, based on a federal panel of experts' estimate on Aug. 2 that about 4.1 million barrels of oil leaked from its well into the Gulf. Although environmental lawyers say BP is likely to negotiate a lower penalty, the fines could still crimp the company's ability to pay for cleanup costs, force it to sell more assets, and cut into future investment plans of incoming Chief Executive Officer Robert Dudley.

### [Transocean gets 249 lawsuits, claims over oil spill](#)

ZURICH (AFP) – Close to 250 lawsuits or claims have been filed against Transocean, the company which owns the BP-leased offshore rig behind the huge Gulf of Mexico oil spill, a filing by the firm showed Thursday.

### [Sales plunge in oil spill's wake](#)

Businesses on Florida's Gulf Coast are watching tourism dollars slip away -- even when there's no oil in sight.

### [BP Offers Venezuelan, Asian Assets to Rosneft and TNK-BP, Vedomosti Says](#)

BP Plc's incoming Chief Executive Officer Robert Dudley offered to sell projects in Vietnam, Pakistan and Venezuela to OAO Rosneft and TNK-BP, Vedomosti said today, citing an unnamed official closed to the British company.

### [Scientists give Gulf of Mexico a 'C' before spill](#)

The Gulf of Mexico was not a pristine place even before the BP oil spill. Scientists asked to grade its health pre-spill gave it a "C" and graded its fish and wetlands a "D."

The Associated Press sought these baseline assessments from 75 scientists as part of a series that will follow the recovery of the Gulf. Scientists only offered grades in their areas of expertise and an average was calculated for each category.

## [In Comments on Oil's Fate, an Air of Mistrust](#)

As my colleagues Campbell Robertson, Justin Gillis and I reported on reaction, scientific and otherwise, to a government report on the fate of the oil in the gulf, it emerged that the Obama administration faced something of a credibility gap in conveying its findings to some gulf residents, environmental groups and even scientists.

There were plenty of varied opinions out there, of course. But what came through loud and clear in the interviews I conducted was how leery many were of pronouncements by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the government agency charged with monitoring the health of the waters and the climate.

## [Report: China considering \\$14.7B investment to spark production of hybrids and EVs](#)

China's new ten-year investment plan (2011-2020) sets aside over 100 billion yuan (\$14.7 billion U.S. at the current exchange rate) for the development and production of alternative technology vehicles. The plan is expected to be approved later this month and should go a long way towards helping China reach its annual production goal of 500,000 hybrids and EVs starting in 2011.

## [Transition Town Workshop at UNH](#)

DURHAM — A two-day Transition Town Workshop on ways to work in your community toward a transition to life after peak oil consumption will be offered Aug. 14-15 in Nesmith Hall, Room 119 on the University of New Hampshire campus.

## [Young adults want way out of poverty](#)

This might all sound like the back to the land movement of the '60s, but don't ever call these young people hippies, because they'll give you good reasons why you're wrong. First of all, they are not naïve children rebelling against the establishment — these are responsible, hard working and knowledgeable young adults who are about to meet one of the greatest challenges humanity has ever faced head on; if they don't make a go of it there won't be a safe place to run back to and they know it. Add to that, the fact that they're not walking into this believing that it will be easy; that they're asking for all the advice and assistance the establishment can give them to make their ideas work; and that they're hoping their community will include struggling people of all ages who share their ideals and maybe, just maybe, they'll make believers of us all. And just in case you need more convincing look up transition towns, ecovillages and intentional communities on the web; you might be surprised by what you find.

## [Fungus on Track to Extinguish Bats in Northeast](#)

A research team organized by Thomas Kunz of Boston University has concluded in a new paper that a common, beneficial bat species is likely to be completely wiped out across much of the Northeastern United States within 20 years due to a spreading fungal infection. The basics are laid out in the news section of the journal Science, which is also publishing the research paper. The news report mentions that bat biologists suggest landowners can create boost bats' prospects by erecting bat houses.

### [Roadside Invader: Engineered Canola](#)

Genetically engineered canola resistant to two common herbicides has been found growing widely along roadsides in North Dakota, one of the first instances of a biotech crop establishing itself in the wild.

### [Wheat prices soar. Are bread prices next?](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- With wheat futures soaring to their highest level in two years, you could soon find yourself paying more for a loaf of bread at your local grocery store.

The price of wheat has surged more than 80% from its seven-month low in June. Prices continued to rally Thursday, surging to their highest level since August 2008, after Russia said it would ban grain exports until Dec. 1 due to a drought that has destroyed more than 20% of its wheat crop.

### [Wildfire Smoke in Moscow Forces Delay of 120 Flights](#)

More than 140 flights were delayed at Moscow airports because of thick, acrid smoke from forest and peat-bog fires east of the city that raised pollution to almost five times the maximum admissible levels.

### [Japan power firms mostly behind CO2 cut goals -survey says](#)

TOKYO (Reuters) - Most Japanese power firms are behind self-imposed goals to cut carbon emissions under the Kyoto Protocol, a Reuters survey showed on Friday, but carbon traders said the companies have enough U.N. credits to offset the lag.

The survey showed more than 100 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent of carbon credits due to be delivered by 2012 are unused in the 10 power firm accounts.

### [US envoy: Climate talks slipping backward](#)

BONN, Germany – Global climate talks appear to have slipped backward after five days of negotiations in Bonn, the chief U.S. delegate said Friday, adding that some countries were renegeing on promises they made last year to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Poor countries agreed with the grim assessment made by U.S. negotiator Jonathan Pershing, saying that latest round of talks on how to fight global warming have been frustrating.

### [California: Brown Puts Whitman on the Defensive over Greenhouse Gases](#)

How does California attorney general Jerry Brown fight billionaire Meg Whitman in the battle to be the next governor of the Golden State? Whitman, the former CEO of eBay, spends nearly as much per day (an average of \$531,378 over the past six weeks) as Brown has spent all year – \$633,205. Yet the cagey and frugal Brown leads the free-spending billionaire in the latest poll 37% to 34%. By necessity, Brown is running a low-budget guerrilla campaign against Whitman, whose spending has now zoomed past the \$100 million mark. Skilled at jumping on issues and turning them to his advantage, Brown is living off free media, hoarding his \$23 million in campaign cash for fall television ads and doing his best to keep the Whitman juggernaut off balance. And now, he's picked up his latest weapon: Proposition 23 on the November ballot.

### [Australians' Views Shift on Climate Change](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Australians' attitudes about global warming could be a factor later this month in the general election where climate change has emerged as an issue. The percentage of Australians who are aware of climate change and say it results from human activities fell from 52% in June 2008 to 44% in March 2010, while the number attributing it to natural causes increased 10 percentage points.

### [Fighting global warming in poor nations will mean tax on trade and travel](#)

A US\$100 billion (Dh367.31bn) promise by the industrialised world to help poorer countries fight global warming will require new taxes that could hit world trade, air travel or financial transactions, an environmental expert told UN climate talks yesterday.

Such levies, which would affect everyone from air passengers to workers transferring funds overseas, have become a key point of debate at ongoing climate talks that aim at reaching a new international treaty on global warming by December.

### [Arctic discovery confirms impact of global warming](#)

It's no wonder Ottawa won't do anything to reduce climate change. The warming Earth

has made a dream come true for federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice.

“I’m elated,” Prentice is reported to have exclaimed when informed *HMS Investigator*, a British ship that sank 155 years ago while searching for Sir John Franklin’s doomed Northwest Passage expedition, had been found in the cold western Arctic Ocean.

### [A climate ‘Plan B’ for team Obama](#)

Now comes an even fresher report -- this one from the Presidential Climate Action Project (PCAP) -- that details several ways President Obama also can be a "go-getter," using powers Congress delegated to the Executive Branch in the past.

PCAP offers five ideas for presidential action, with details on how to implement them before Cancun:

### [Coal: The cheap, dirty and direct route to irreversible climate change](#)

The global dominance of industrial interests dependant on cheap energy sourced from coal mean climate change is inevitable



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