



Drumbeat: August 19, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on August 19, 2010 - 9:24am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Bangladesh shuts gas filling stations for Ramadan](#)

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“birth dearth”). Still others think the population problem will solve itself, or that technological innovations will make our numbers irrelevant.

One thing is certain: The planet and its resources are finite, and it cannot support an infinite population of humans or any other species.

A second thing is also certain: The issue of population is too important to avoid just because it is controversial.

[ANALYSIS - Venezuela's PDVSA at crossroads](#)

(Reuters) - Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA is at a crossroads: act now to salvage the skills and equipment that once made it a rival to Brazilian giant

Petrobras, or risk tipping irrevocably into the type of decline suffered by Mexico's Pemex.

So far, it appears more likely to take the same path as Pemex.

[Venezuela's Heavy Crude, PDVSA Looks to Diversify, Are Regional Customers OK?](#)

LyondellBassell's 2nd quarter conference call brought to light that PDVSA intends to

replace a long-term crude supply contract with probably a year to year deal as part of Venezuela's commitment to diversify its customer base. Geology has blessed the Western Hemisphere, particularly Venezuela, with massive heavy and bitumen reserves. While economics and geopolitics drive the crude's final destination, regional abundance should leave both regional and Asian customers in good stead.

[Iran fuel imports set to fall 90pc in Aug](#)

Iran's gasoline imports for August look set to be around half those of the previous month and have plunged by almost 90 per cent from a year ago, according to Reuters calculations based on trade sources.

A new round of US and EU sanctions has very effectively choked off many potential suppliers to Iran, whose limited refining capacity means it has had to import up to 40 per cent of its gasoline needs, even though it is the fifth biggest oil exporter.

[Troops out of Iraq by 2012? Don't bet on it](#)

While violence has dipped sharply since the height of sectarian warfare from 2006-2007, Iraq remains fragile and its leaders have not resolved a number of politically explosive issues that could easily trigger renewed fighting.

The United States wants a stable, friendly Iraq, and analysts are skeptical Obama will do anything to jeopardize that.

[BP accused of withholding spill data](#)

WASHINGTON — The owner of the Deepwater Horizon rig is accusing BP of withholding critical evidence needed to identify the cause of the worst maritime oil spill in history.

In a sternly worded letter obtained by The Associated Press, Transocean says that lack of information is preventing the company from informing state and federal investigators, and the families of those killed on the rig, about what happened.

[Power shortfall reaches 2,000 megawatts](#)

ISLAMABAD - The power shortfall has reached 2000 megawatts, thus making the lives of masses more miserable even during the holy month of Ramazan as they are forced to face unscheduled loadshedding.

[ANALYSIS / Plane fuel tax cut may close local airports](#)

A transport ministry plan to halve the aircraft fuel tax could spell doom for some of Japan's regional airports.

The ministry likely will be pressed during budget negotiations to drastically review the airport improvement account, with funds earmarked for regional airport upgrades likely to be targeted for deep cuts.

[Rwanda harnesses energy from exploding lake](#)

Rwanda is centering its new energy plan on an unlikely, potentially dangerous source: Lake Kivu.

At first glance, the lake's placid blue waters appear harmless enough (shown to the right). But beneath its beautiful exterior lie huge reservoirs of methane and carbon dioxide that, if released onto the surface, would endanger the two million people living around its shores.

[Armenia's next environmental crisis?](#)

Human logging in Armenia wipes out an estimated 750,000 cubic meters of forest coverage each year. Today only 8 percent of the country is forested. That's down from a peak of more than 40 percent, according to the World Bank.

At the current rate of deforestation, environmentalists say desertification will take place in the next 50 years.

[Out of the Loss of a Garden, Another Life Lesson](#)

Ms. Gussow had gone back to school in 1969 to earn a doctorate in nutrition at Columbia University, at a time when nutrition was all about vitamins and chemistry, not how food was grown and where it came from. She began connecting the dots between what Americans were eating and how that food — be it factory-farmed chicken or Twinkies — was produced.

She created a legendary course, Nutritional Ecology, which she still teaches today, with a former student, Toni Liquori, who as director of School Food Focus, a nationwide program, works with school districts to buy more healthful, locally grown food.

Because Ms. Gussow dared to talk about energy use, pollution, diabetes and obesity as the true costs of food, she was initially viewed as a maverick crank, but her connections inspired the work of people like Michael Pollan, whose book "In Defense of Food," echoes many of her revelations.

[John Michael Greer: Two agricultures, not one](#)

Talking about the future after peak oil is a challenging thing. One of the things that makes it most challenging is the extent to which so many people seem unable to imagine any way of doing things that isn't business as usual in some lightly modified form. Last week's post made a passing reference to this odd blinkering of our collective imagination, in the context of current worries in the peak oil blogosphere about "peak phosphorus."

It's true, of course, that the rapid depletion of the world's reserves of rock phosphate, a key ingredient in chemical fertilizers, is a serious short term problem. Today's agricultural systems depend on chemical fertilizers, and there aren't any other abundant and highly concentrated sources of mineral phosphate available to be dumped into the intake hoppers of fertilizer factories. Still, this doesn't mean that we're all going to starve to death; it means that the way we produce food nowadays is not long for the world, and will be replaced by other ways of producing food that don't depend on mass infusions of nonrenewable resources.

[Record and ridicule: Female cyclists expose sexist idiots online](#)

I told people about the time a pedestrian pulled my top down at a traffic light; they told me of people spitting at them and throwing building braces at them as they drove by. A dozen women told me they'd had their backsides slapped by drivers and passengers. I'd opened the flood gates by daring to speak out and say that enough was enough.

What surprised me was that far more men than women contacted me. They said they'd had no idea of the level of abuse women received, and that when they mentioned my site to female cyclists they opened a Pandora's Box of untapped resentment towards the sexist abuse they'd experienced over the years.

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[Oil Trades Near 1-Month Low After U.S. Supplies Rise to Highest in Decades](#)

Crude oil futures traded near their lowest level in a month on concern that the recovery is not strong enough to whittle down excessive U.S. fuel inventories.

The U.S. Energy Department report yesterday showed that total petroleum stockpiles surged to the highest level in at least 20 years. Crude futures in New York subsequently fell to \$73.83 a barrel, the lowest in more than a month.

“All the macro data points to a slowdown in the growth in the second half, which would be bearish for commodities,” said Gerrit Zambo, a trader at Bayerische Landesbank in Munich. “I see a good chance to slip down to \$70 in the coming weeks and months.”

[Oil Futures Show 2012 U.S. Discount Disappearing on Spill](#)

The discount on New York crude for delivery in 2012 compared with North Sea Brent may disappear as the government restricts drilling after the worst oil spill in U.S. history.

[Caracas to continue Iran gas export](#)

Venezuela will continue to supply Iran with gasoline despite the threat of international sanctions.

David Velasquez, Venezuela's ambassador to Tehran, said on Thursday that his government would not be "bullied" into halting gasoline shipments.

[Sudan Targeting 35% Increase in Oil Output Next Year, Energy Minister Says](#)

Sudan hopes to increase oil production by 35 percent in 2011, as European and Arab investors show more interest in exploring for crude in Africa's biggest country, Petroleum Minister Lual Deng said.

Sudan, the third-largest producer of crude in sub-Saharan Africa, wants to raise output to 650,000 barrels a day next year from its current level of as much as 480,000 barrels a day, he told reporters in the capital Khartoum.

[91% of UAE commuters use cars](#)

Commuters across the country are unwilling to give up their cars in favour of public transport despite a huge investment in the sector, a survey reveals.

Some 91 per cent of UAE residents prefer to use private transport to travel to work every day with 79 per cent using their cars and 12 per cent going by taxi, according to a survey by Regus, a global serviced offices company.

[BP Countersued by Commodities Trading Head Who Claims Wrongful Dismissal](#)

BP Plc's former head of commodities trading Quek Chin Thean and three other ex-employees countersued the oil company after being accused of misusing confidential information and helping BP's rival set up a competing business.

[Brazil May Price Oil at \\$10-12 in Petrobras Swap. Estado de S. Paulo Says](#)

Brazil's government may price so-called pre-salt oil reserves at \$10 to \$12 per barrel in an oil-for-stock swap with Petroleo Brasileiro SA, O Estado de S. Paulo reported, without saying where it got the information.

[Beirut eyes offshore round](#)

Lebanon hopes to launch a licensing round for offshore gas exploration at the beginning of 2012, the Energy Minister Gebran Bassil said today, two days after parliament unanimously ratified a long-awaited energy law.

[Shell May Spend \\$50 Billion in Australia Over 10 Years Amid Shift to Gas](#)

Royal Dutch Shell Plc plans to spend as much as \$50 billion in Australia over the next decade, more than in any other region, as Europe's largest oil company continues a shift to gas production.

[BP "bottom-kill" on Gulf well to be early September: Allen](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – BP Plc should be conducting the operation to finally kill its ruptured Gulf of Mexico oil well the week of September 6, the top official overseeing the spill response said on Thursday.

Retired Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen, appearing on CNN, said under the latest timeline agreed with BP, the operation to kill the well by injecting mud and cement into the bottom through a relief well should be conducted the week after the U.S. Labor Day holiday, which is on Monday, September 6.

[Florida Weighs Billing BP More Than \\$1 Billion to Plug Fund Gap](#)

Florida may send BP Plc a claim for more than \$1 billion to close a budget gap after the largest U.S. oil spill as neighboring Gulf Coast states weigh their options.

Steve Yerrid, a Tampa lawyer chosen by Florida Governor Charlie Crist to advise him on legal issues concerning the spill, said the state may seek an initial payment in the "lower range" of billions of dollars to make up for lost tax revenue.

[Oil Plumes May Be More Toxic Than Thought, Scientists Warn](#)

Undersea plumes of microscopic oil droplets extending dozens of miles from the BP wellhead may be more toxic to marine microorganisms in the Gulf of Mexico than previously believed, according to preliminary experimental results from Florida researchers.

[Americans divided on Gulf offshore drilling: poll](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Americans are almost equally divided on whether the Obama administration should lift the moratorium on offshore oil drilling and on the possibility of BP returning to explore in the area of its massive spill, according to a new Gallup poll.

But Americans continue to disapprove of the way both BP Plc and President Barack Obama have handled the blowout of the well that spewed millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico before being capped in July.

[David Suzuki: More drilling, even more disasters](#)

The Gulf of Mexico disaster is just the latest in a long history of "accidents." As Canada considers drilling for oil in the Arctic now that ice seems to be less of an impediment, we should remember that in October 1970, a blow-out at a natural gas well on King Christian Island in the Arctic Ocean created a massive flame as up to 5.6 million cubic metres of gas a day spewed for more than three months. It was the second blow-out in the Arctic since drilling began the year before. Around the same time, the drilling consortium, Panarctic Oil Ltd., was slapped with a huge fine for dumping junk steel, waste oil, and other garbage into the Arctic Ocean.

[Aramco, Adnoc Seek Gasoline, Diesel as Refineries Undergo Maintenance Work](#)

Saudi Aramco and Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., the state-owned oil producers, are seeking deliveries of gasoline and diesel to meet demand as refineries undergo

maintenance, three traders with knowledge of the tenders said.

Saudi Arabia's Aramco, the world's largest crude exporter, is buying gasoline from September through the end of the year, according to the traders, who asked not to be identified since the talks aren't public. The company is also seeking diesel to fuel power plants in August and September, another trader said.

[Petron to launch cheap gas for passenger vehicles, boats, farm machines](#)

MANILA, Philippines -- In a bid to make cheap gasoline available to more Filipinos, oil giant Petron Corp. will sell starting this Friday its Petron Pinoy Gasoline brand—a more affordable gasoline formulation for public utility vehicles, bancas and farm equipment.

[Canadian Senate Committee Rules Out Ban On Offshore Drilling](#)

(RTTNews) - A Canadian Senate Committee says there is no need for a moratorium on off-shore drilling in Canadian waters.

The bipartisan committee on Energy, Environment and Natural Resources arrived at the conclusion after probing the state of off-shore drilling in Canada.

[Group: Survey shows ill health in Wyo. frack zone](#)

(AP:CHEYENNE, Wyo.) Four out of five people who have returned health surveys report respiratory problems in a central Wyoming community where some residents say gas drilling has polluted their water wells, an environmental group said Wednesday.

[Russian nuclear chief: Iranian plant fuel to be strictly supervised](#)

Moscow - The head of Russian nuclear energy company Rosatom assured Thursday that the upcoming delivery of nuclear fuel rods to Iran's Bushehr plant will be strictly supervised by the International Atomic Energy Agency IAEA.

[What if there's much less coal than we think?](#)

How much coal is there in the world?

It's tough to think of a more important question for the next half-century. The answer will play a huge role in shaping public policy and directing capital investments. So we've got it pretty well nailed down, right?

Turns out, maybe not.

[Tom Whipple: On the Death of Matthew Simmons](#)

Last week Matt Simmons, who was America's preeminent proponent of the idea that world oil production was about to peak, died at the age of 67. Simmons was unique among those talking and writing about peak oil in that he came from the very heart of American capitalism, a self-made investment banker for the oil industry. Unlike most who are outspoken on the issue of peak oil, Simmons was a Republican, an energy advisor to President George W. Bush, and commanded the attention of the financial and mainstream media.

[We are facing a tough future](#)

And the overarching headwind is peak oil. It is the profound and unending change in our world. That this is real is not in doubt.

[The Singularity Summit 2010](#)

Worse, I'm involved in various virtual forums where a surprisingly high percentage of normally creditable academics fear the dual hammer of the Greenhouse Effect and Peak Oil crushing the world economy. Some actually have formed sustainable societies awaiting the culling of the world population from 7 billion to 1 billion. Pessimism is running rampant.

Thus, it was refreshing and invigorating for me to experience unbounded optimism at the Singularity Summit gathering in San Francisco this past weekend. Six hundred geeky, bright and mostly young participants sat in on two days of hope for the future.

[Time To Terminate Western Civilization Before It Terminates Us](#)

Western civilization has been in decline at least since 1979, when world per-capita oil supply peaked coincident with the Carter Doctrine regarding oil in the Middle East. In my mind, and perhaps only there, these two events marked the apex of American Empire, which began about the time Thomas Jefferson — arguably the most enlightened of the Founding Fathers — said, with respect to native Americans: “In war, they will kill some of us; we shall destroy all of them.” It wasn't long after 1979 that the U.S. manufacturing base was shipped overseas and we began serious engagement with Wall Street-based casino culture as the basis for our industrial economy. By most economic measure, we've experienced a lost decade, so it's too late for a fast crash of the industrial economy. We're in the midst of the same slow train wreck we've been experiencing for more than a decade, but the train is teetering on the edge of a cliff. Meanwhile, all we want to discuss, at every level in this country, is the quality of service in the dining car.

[Into wind -- trip to Danish green island Samsøe](#)

The small Danish island of Samsøe with a population of 4,200 offers a refreshing alternative, amid the world's dependence on fossil fuel that is mainly responsible for climate change and global warming.

[Another Brick in the \(Blend\) Wall: Key thresholds and barriers for biofuels](#)

We hear so much about the ethanol blend wall, that we can be excused for thinking it is the primary wall, or threshold, out there.

[How can we get our eco-warrior neighbours off our backs?](#)

Our neighbours are always on our family's back about being more eco-conscious – we drive a 4x4 (we live in the country), have four children and can afford plenty of holidays abroad. They're a smaller family who prefer camping and growing their own vegetables. Short of moving, how can we call a truce?

[Building community resilience for the transition to a low-carbon future: The Transition Town movement](#)

Helping communities make the transition to a low-carbon society is more a social than a technical issue, say Transition Town proponents. Many low-carbon technology options have already been developed, but their social adoption is still delayed.

A prime focus of the Transition Town movement is building community resilience in the face of serious and potentially sudden contractions in global trade and industrial agriculture - contractions that will result in insecure supplies of energy and food.

[Gov't aims for 100% climate awareness](#)

While about 70 percent of Filipinos are aware of the impact of climate change, the government vehemently pushed for 100 percent awareness on the pressing issue to prepare and encourage people to take action on the adverse effects of climate change.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) issued the appeal on Thursday after Pulse Asia survey results show that seven of every 10 Filipinos acknowledge the dangers posed by climate change to the environment.

[China launches low-carbon pilot in select cities, provinces](#)

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) launched a national low-carbon province and low-carbon city experimental project in Beijing on Aug. 18. The project will be implemented in five provinces, namely Guangdong, Liaoning, Hubei, Shaanxi and Yunnan, and in eight cities, namely Tianjin, Chongqing, Shenzhen, Xiamen, Hangzhou, Nanchang, Guiyang and Baoding.

[Russia launches inquiry into Pavlovsk seed bank after Twitter campaign](#)

The Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, has ordered an immediate inquiry into the potential destruction of the world's oldest seed bank following a court case and a Twitter campaign by Guardian readers and others.

[GOP candidates knock global warming](#)

Fueled by anti-Obama rhetoric and news articles purportedly showing scientists manipulating their own data, Republicans running for the House, Senate and governor's mansions have gotten bolder in stating their doubts over the well-established link between man-made greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

[Pakistan -- a Sad New Benchmark in Climate-Related Disasters](#)

UNITED NATIONS -- Devastating flooding that has swamped one-fifth of Pakistan and left millions homeless is likely the worst natural disaster to date attributable to climate change, U.N. officials and climatologists are now openly saying.

Most experts are still cautioning against tying any specific event directly to emissions of greenhouse gases. But scientists at the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in Geneva say there's no doubt that higher Atlantic Ocean temperatures contributed to the disaster begun late last month.

[New Computer Model Advances Climate Change Research](#)

ScienceDaily — Scientists can now study climate change in far more detail with powerful new computer software released by the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR).

[On the frontline of climate change](#)

Irrigated by one of the world's mightiest river systems, the Murray-Darling Basin yields nearly half of Australia's fresh produce. But the basin is ailing, and scientists fear that as

climate change grips the driest inhabited continent, its main foodbowl could become a global warming ground zero.

The signs are already ominous: in the Riverland, one of the nation's major horticulture areas, dying vines and parched lemon trees attest to critical water shortages. Farmers have had their water allocations slashed during the recent crippling drought; 200 sold up, and many of those who hung on are struggling.

In Renmark, the region's oldest town, tales of hardship abound. Some families have spent their life savings; others are drowning in debt.

At one school, children have reportedly been stealing packed lunches from classmates. "That's how bad things have got, and I know people in those circumstances," says Jim Belehris, an almond grower.



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