



Drumbeat: November 8, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on November 8, 2010 - 8:53am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Will masses embrace electric cars despite high prices?](#)

The biggest automotive revolution since horseless carriages first rumbled along rutted roads is about to take place — and you'll have to strain to hear it.

That's because the first mainstream electric cars in nearly a century will be hitting the streets over the next couple of months, and their electric motors are as eerily quiet as they are tailpipe-emission-free.

Automakers such as Nissan and Chevrolet are touting the new vehicles in splashy ads, but already there are signs that wary mainstream consumers won't be quick to embrace the largely untested electric models. Automakers likely will have no trouble selling out their initial, limited production to electric enthusiasts and early adopters who have to have the latest thing, but mass acceptance that would lead to profitable production in big numbers remains a question.

[Will masses embrace electric cars despite high prices?](#)

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[Chevy Volt can go the distance](#)

DRIVING ON I-95 (CNNMoney.com) -- On a long rainy-day drive from Washington, D.C., to Times Square, the Chevrolet Volt showed itself to be more than just a technological oddity.

The Volt, it turns out, is a really good, fully functional automobile that could just save you a lot of cash on gasoline, too.

[Is the oil and gas industry heading for a staffing crisis?](#)

Executives have been worried for a while that their workforces are getting older, with a lack of new talent coming in to replace retiring staff. Instead, young engineers and other bright graduates who are looking for a career in industry are heading for the much more sexy green energy sector.

[Energy investments to hit \\$26trn](#)

Saudi Arabia has completed a gigantic hydrocarbon capacity expansion programme involving investment of more than \$100 billion and this will support global energy security, according to its oil minister.

Ali Al-Naimi said the programme was part of overall plans by the 12-nation Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers to expand their sustainable output capacity to face world demand.

[Panel: Dollars did not trump safety in Gulf spill](#)

WASHINGTON -- The presidential commission investigating the massive Gulf oil spill has found no instance where a decision deliberately sacrificed safety to cut costs.

Fred H. Bartlit, Jr., the panel's chief counsel, in a presentation Monday said the probe did not uncover any case where an individual made a conscious choice to "favor dollars over safety."

[Scientists Fear Oil Is Settling on Bottom of Gulf](#)

The federal government is concerned that oil from the Gulf of Mexico spill may be settling on the ocean floor, causing environmental damage where it's hardest to see.

[Where's the Gulf oil? In the food web, study says](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Scientists say they have for the first time tracked how certain nontoxic elements of oil from the BP spill quickly became dinner for plankton, entering the food web in the Gulf of Mexico.

The new study sheds light on two key questions about the aftermath of the 172 million-gallon spill in April: What happened to the oil that once covered the water's surface and will it work its way into the diets of Gulf marine life?

[Pakistan: Gas crisis to pinch the country - II](#)

To overcome gas shortage Pakistan will import gas from Iran. For \$2.5 billion Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project, the government has awarded a \$55 million feasibility study contract to ILF of Germany, imposing the condition that the feasibility should be completed in 12 months, instead of original plan of 18 months. The agreement (GSPA) has been signed from third party certification for uninterrupted supply of gas from the source field to Pakistan for 30 years.

[Pakistan: Steps to calm the gathering storm](#)

The country has faced an acute energy crisis over the last three years. Be it a supply gap in electricity generation resulting in prolonged outages, a demand surge because of unplanned growth in gas consumption or inter-corporate debt in the energy sector, we have seen it all.

On top of that the fuel logistics sector is under a cloud due to attacks on supplies to Afghanistan. In one way or the other, numerous problems have been faced by ordinary citizens and businesses. Even the government has not been spared.

[Chinese to help build Ring Road, power plants](#)

LAHORE: Punjab government on Saturday signed memoranda of understanding with two Chinese companies for cooperation in infrastructure projects including the southern loop of the Lahore Ring Road.

The government and the China International Water and Electric Corporation and the Welt Connect Company would also work together on several hydro, wind and solar power projects across the province.

[Drug Cartels Disrupt Basic Services In Mexico](#)

Five Pemex workers went to their jobs at a government-owned gas compression plant near the Texas border six months ago and never returned. Masked men, apparently

members of a drug cartel operating there, had warned employees of Petroleos Mexicanos that they were no longer allowed to enter the area.

Around the same time in May, three inspectors for the Mexican Environment Department headed into the wooded mountains west of Mexico City to investigate a pollution complaint. Their tortured bodies were found the next day. Authorities said they stumbled onto a drug lab.

[Coal May Rise 12% Next Year on Asian Demand, Deutsche Bank Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Coal burned to generate power may jump 12 percent next year on Asian demand for the fuel and supply constraints in producer nations, Deutsche Bank AG said.

[Cook Islands election in jeopardy over transport issues](#)

Problems with transportation in the Cook Islands could threaten the country's November 17 general elections

The islands of the Cook group are widely scattered and difficulties have been experienced with just one ship left to service the outer islands, especially the northern group where there is a fuel shortage.

[Algae for biofuels: Moving from promise to reality, but how fast?](#)

A new report from the Energy Biosciences Institute (EBI) in Berkeley projects that development of cost-competitive algae biofuel production will require much more long-term research, development and demonstration. In the meantime, several non-fuel applications of algae could serve to advance the nascent industry.

'Even with relatively favourable and forward-looking process assumptions (from cultivation to harvesting to processing), algae oil production with microalgae cultures will be expensive and, at least in the near-to-mid-term, will require additional income streams to be economically viable,' write authors Nigel Quinn and Tryg Lundquist of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley Lab), which is a partner in the BP-funded institute.

[A Taxpayer-Funded Sucker Play for the 21st Century](#)

Now I'm not so naïve to believe that we're going to see an end to subsidies for fossil fuels.

Despite coal and oil being mature and profitable industries, the handouts will continue

simply because you and I do not dictate OUR energy policy. That's left up to the special interest puppet masters who spin truth and fill bureaucratic troughs.

However, the realities of peak oil, national security vulnerabilities, and a new industrial revolution in clean energy (in which we're clearly allowing China to pummel us) will be enough to force a transition of our energy economy.

[Thermodynamic roots of economics](#)

The first and second laws of thermodynamics should also be called the first and second laws of economics. Why? Because without them there would be no scarcity, and without scarcity, no economics.

[Kunstler: Pre Post Mortem](#)

The unvarnished truth of our predicament is that all pathways now lead to the same destination: a falling US standard of living as measured conventionally. What's unknown is how swift and severe this decline might be, exactly what all its implications are for the social order and geopolitics, and whether it might present itself in a form that could be called collapse. For the moment, one question is: do we go broke the standard way by having less money, or the trick way by destroying the value of our money so that folks (as President Obama might say) have lots of it, only it isn't worth anything. There is even at this late date much debate between the inflationistas and the deflationistas - that is, those who think the economy ends in a bang or a whimper.

[A world made by hand needn't wait](#)

Kunstler sets himself apart from other writers who've tried to imagine such a world—and who usually populate it with cannibals, evil zombies, and a sky that will never be blue again—by remembering the creed of all good novelists: Fiction is folks. In other words, it's about the people, stupid. Kunstler manages to portray the collapse of everything we presently regard as indispensable, while somehow leaving us with the idea that not all change is bad and not all people are evil. People are just people. Some of them will take from you if they can, but most will surprise you every time by their willingness to give of themselves for what is right.

[Review: "The Witch of Hebron" by James Kunstler](#)

Having stated publicly that he is not anti-feminist as many concluded from his first post apocalyptic novel, *World Made By Hand*, Kunstler attempts to redeem himself with the title character. *The Witch of Hebron* is a delectable goddess of a woman who survives living alone through the grace of various psychic powers and the healing of men with a good lay. Armed thus, she appears to have an edge in a world peopled with robbers and

filled with frequent violence.

[DOE's Chu Faces Grueling Year of Budget Battles, Oversight Hearings](#)

Energy Secretary Steven Chu coasted through his 2009 Senate confirmation and began his tenure at the Department of Energy with broad political support for his goals to combat climate change and foster alternative energy sources.

The outlook is less rosy today.

[Cost of Green Power Makes Projects Tougher Sell](#)

Michael Polsky's wind farm company was doing so well in 2008 that banks were happy to lend millions for his effort to light up America with clean electricity.

But two years later, Mr. Polsky has a product he is hard-pressed to sell.

His company, Invenergy, had a contract to sell power to a utility in Virginia, but state regulators rejected the deal, citing the recession and the lower prices of natural gas and other fossil fuels.

"The ratepayers of Virginia must be protected from costs for renewable energy that are unreasonably high," the regulators said. Wind power would have increased the monthly bill of a typical residential customer by 0.2 percent.

[Oil Trades Near a Two-Year High as U.S. Employment Figures Beat Forecasts](#)

Oil declined from its highest level in two years as the dollar strengthened against the euro, curtailing crude's appeal as a protection against inflation.

Futures advanced to \$87.49 a barrel, the highest level since Oct. 9, 2008, before dropping as the euro fell on concern that Ireland will struggle to plug its budget deficit. Hedge funds increased bullish bets on oil to the highest level since at least June 2006, data from the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission showed last week, even before the Federal Reserve said it will boost debt purchases to revive the economy.

[Hedge Funds Raise Bullish Bets on Oil to Four-Year High](#)

Hedge funds ramped up bullish bets on oil to the highest level since at least June 2006 as the Federal Reserve enacted stimulus measures, helping drive crude to a two-year high and weakening the dollar.

[China suffers diesel shortage, disrupting industry](#)

BEIJING (AP) - Aggravated Chinese truck drivers parked for hours to buy rationed diesel Monday as shortages blamed on a government conservation campaign and possible hoarding by state oil companies disrupted industry and trade.

Supplies ran low after thousands of factories bought diesel generators to cope with power cuts imposed by authorities to meet energy-saving goals. That boosted already strong fuel demand amid rapid economic growth and complaints that major suppliers are withholding diesel to pressure Beijing to raise government-set retail prices.

[When a Rig Moves In Next Door](#)

IN the sparsely populated pastures of De Soto Parish in Louisiana, the ability to extract gas from shale — which can involve a process known as fracking — has been welcomed as an economic windfall. Some residents call it a gift from God.

But 1,400 miles to the north, in Susquehanna County in Pennsylvania, shale gas development has divided neighbors, spurred lawsuits and sown deep mistrust. Along Grove Avenue in Montrose, the county seat, a billboard looms overhead, advertising the services of a personal-injury law firm. “HURT by DRILLING?” it asks.

Natural gas currently satisfies nearly a quarter of the nation’s power needs. And with vast methane reserves now available in previously inaccessible layers of shale deep underground, its position as a cornerstone of the domestic energy supply may well be secured for decades — if the public supports it.

[Energy firms lead the way for foreign deals in Iraq](#)

Alongside BP, China's largest oil company last June became the first foreign firm to win a contract to produce oil in Iraq. China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) also leads a consortium, including Malaysia's Petronas and France's Total, which in January won a contract to develop the Halfaya oil field

[Nigeria: 5 kidnapped in offshore oil rig attack](#)

(AP:LAGOS, Nigeria) Gunmen in speedboats kidnapped five workers and wounded two others in an attack Monday at an oil rig operating off the coast of Nigeria's troubled southern delta, officials said.

The attack on the newly installed rig operated by London-based Afren PLC and a nearby support ship comes as sporadic attacks continue in a region supposedly calmed by a government-sponsored amnesty program.

[Nigerian Militants Planning to Attack Crude Installations `In Coming Days'](#)

Nigeria's main militant group said they are holding four foreigners hostage and will start attacks on oil installations in the Niger River delta in "coming days."

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta has custody of three French nationals and a Thai seized off Nigeria's coast on Sept. 21 and will release names and personal details "very shortly," Jomo Gbomo, a spokesman for the group, said in an e-mailed statement today.

[Shell to sell 10% stake in Woodside for US\\$3.35B](#)

Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Europe's largest oil company, is selling a 10% stake in Woodside Petroleum Ltd. for US\$3.35 billion, freeing up funds to support a sixfold increase in its Australian natural gas production.

[Sinochem Yields Approach Dow Chemical's as M&A Wins Support](#)

Sinochem Group, China's biggest provider of chemicals products, sold 30-year bonds at yields approaching those of America's Dow Chemical Co. as investors showed confidence in its push to expand globally through acquisitions.

[China's Oil Companies on M.&A. Spree](#)

China's national oil companies have been on a massive spending spree and the deal-making looks set to continue unabated for some time, The Financial Time reported.

So far this year, Chinese oil companies have shelled out a whopping \$24.6 billion on overseas acquisitions, or one-fifth of all global deal activity in the oil and gas sector, according to analysis prepared for the Financial Times.

[Pipeline to Baltic, Moscow Road Herald \\$2.5 Billion Market](#)

Russian companies building the planned Moscow-to-Minsk highway and an oil pipeline to the Baltic Sea are spurring a new market for infrastructure bonds that the government expects to reach \$2.5 billion a year.

[U.S. panel to examine causes of BP oil spill](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The White House oil spill commission will delve into the root causes of the BP offshore drilling disaster at a meeting on Monday that may have liability ramifications for the companies that continue to point the finger at each other for the spill.

[Officials gather for oil spill restoration talks](#)

PENSACOLA, Fla. — U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson will preside over the first official meeting of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force in the aftermath of BP's Gulf of Mexico oil well blowout.

The meeting is set to take place Monday in Pensacola.

[No surprises as president's party wins Azerbaijan elections](#)

When a consortium of western oil companies led by BP won the contract to develop the offshore Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli in 1994, the deal was dubbed the "Contract of the Century". As the EU countries seek to diversify their energy sources away from Russia, Azerbaijan is an important supplier of oil via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and is likely to become the main initial source of gas if the Nabucco pipeline project gets off the ground, thus making stability in the country a priority for its international partners.

However, in the longer term, this stability is looking less certain. Azerbaijan is expected to reach peak oil production by 2020. When oil revenues start to decline, and economic growth in the hydrocarbons-based economy starts to tail off, dissatisfaction with the kleptocratic ruling elite is likely to increase - unless some real benefits are felt by the population, a report from the International Crisis Group report warned in September.

[Georgia, U.S. Export-Import Bank in Talks on \\$200 Million Green Car Plan](#)

Georgia is in talks with the U.S. Export-Import Bank on plans to spend as much as \$200 million on electric and hybrid cars in a bid to create the first "green government" among the former Soviet republics.

The government plans to buy about 4,000 cars in the next three to four years from producers such as General Motors Co., Ford Motor Co. and Toyota Motor Corp., said Economy Minister Vera Kobalia. The cars will cost an average of about \$32,000 apiece, she said.

[Nuclear plant shuts down to repair leaky pipe](#)

MONTPELIER, Vermont — Workers at the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant detected

radioactive water seeping from a leaky pipe in the complex Sunday, forcing the plant to shut down to make repairs. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission said the public was not in any danger.

Plant spokesman Larry Smith said the nuclear reactor was taken out of service at 7 p.m. and estimated it would take 13 hours for it to cool down enough so technicians could enter the area to begin making repairs.

[China plans fifth nuclear reactor for Pakistan](#)

China plans to supply Pakistan with a fifth nuclear energy reactor, accelerating Beijing's commitments to its energy-starved south Asian ally, according to Pakistani government officials.

Beijing's growing support for Pakistan, including military hardware, poses a dilemma for Barack Obama, the US president, who arrived in India on Saturday. New Delhi is also becoming more concerned about Pakistan's close relationship with China. The supply of a fifth nuclear reactor to Pakistan comes after confirmation this year of Beijing's agreement to build two 650MW nuclear energy reactors at Chashma, in the central part of Pakistan's Punjab province, reported The Financial Times.

[Siemens Forecasts 40 Billion Euros of Renewable Energy Sales in 2014](#)

Siemens AG aims to grow revenue from solar equipment, wind turbines and other products designed to save energy to 40 billion euros (\$55 billion) by 2014 as it jostles with General Electric Co. for market share.

[Taiwan moves to slash solar energy prices](#)

Taiwan is preparing to reduce wholesale prices for electricity generated by solar panels by as much as 20 per cent as part of moves designed to bolster the competitiveness of the territory's fast-expanding renewable energy sector.

According to reports in the Chinese-language *Commercial Times*, the price cut is intended to drive demand for solar energy and provide a boost to domestic solar panel manufacturers.

[Report slams EU biofuel policy](#)

An area of unspoiled land twice the size of Belgium could be converted into fields and plantations by 2020, resulting in major carbon emissions, as a result of Europe's thirst for biofuel, according to a report from nine environmental groups.

Land-use change on this scale could cause up to 73 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year – the equivalent of putting around 26 million cars on the road by 2020 - according to an independent report published today (8 November) by groups including Action Aid,

[Process removes carbon, yielding cleaner natural gas](#)

Imagine a source of energy that is plentiful, produces small amounts of pollutants that contribute to global warming, and can be delivered to homes, businesses, and power plants without new distribution systems.

That source could already be here. A new technology developed by a Canadian company aims to remove carbon from natural gas before it's burned, cutting carbon dioxide emissions by as much as 40 percent and capturing solid carbon – known as carbon black – a substance that can be used in making tires, laser printer toner, and other products.

[Oil producers' mood begins to shift over carbon tax](#)

Some oil companies are calling for pricing mechanisms for carbon emissions and even carbon taxes after years of resisting such moves.

So far, the most fervent supporters of carbon pricing are based in Europe but there are signs the movement could spread. "Carbon pricing is essential," Hege Marie Norheim, the senior vice president of Norway's Statoil, told the ADIPEC oil conference in Abu Dhabi last week.

[Climate scientists plan campaign against global-warming skeptics](#)

WASHINGTON — Faced with increasing political attacks, hundreds of climate scientists are joining a broad campaign to push back against congressional conservatives who have threatened prominent researchers with investigations and have vowed to kill regulations to rein in man- made greenhouse-gas emissions.

The efforts reveal a shift among climate scientists, many of whom have traditionally stayed out of politics and avoided the news media. Many now say they are willing to toe-to-toe with their critics, some of whom gained new power when the Republicans won control of the House in Tuesday's election.

[Climate change prosperity or disparity?](#)

What do you do when your entire homeland is slipping into the sea?

This is the earth-shattering reality facing the Polynesian nation of Tuvalu, rapidly being reclaimed by the Pacific owing to rising sea levels.

For the families of this small, slivered island nation, climate change is not something to prepare for in the distant future; it is a reality leading to the melting of polar ice caps and currently stripping them of their homes, their livelihoods and their ancestry.

[Melting ice cap clears path for further destruction](#)

Beautiful. Russia can get natural gas to China faster than ever, where it will quickly be consumed, resulting in increasing greenhouse gas emissions, and even faster rates of polar ice melt.

Even better, the shrinking Arctic ice cap will provide easier and easier access to fossil fuel resources in the North -- currently estimated to represent about one-fourth of the world's untapped oil and gas reserves.

[Global warming may thwart food production](#)

"Water for agriculture is critical for food security," pointed out Dr. Mark W. Rosegrant, a senior research fellow at the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

"The link between water and food is strong," said Dr Lester R. Brown, president of Earth Policy Institute, also based in Washington, D.C. "We drink, in one form or another, nearly 4 liters of water per day. But the food we consume each day requires at least 2,000 liters to produce, 500 times as much."



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