



Drumbeat: April 22, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on April 22, 2011 - 10:12am

[Saudi Cut in Oil Production Stirs Speculation](#)

With political turmoil spreading across North Africa and the Middle East and oil and gasoline prices rising, all eyes in the energy world are on Saudi Arabia. So when the Saudis announced last weekend that they had cut oil production by 800,000 barrels a day only weeks after they said they would meet any supply gap left by the civil war in Libya, oil analysts offered an array of interpretations.

Some agreed with the Saudis' publicly expressed view that the world was actually amply supplied with oil and that speculators and traders were to blame for the rising prices. President Obama even weighed in and endorsed that view.

But others wondered whether the Saudis were able to increase their production at all. Still others suggested that the Saudis were beginning to side with more hawkish members of OPEC, including Iran, who want to curtail production to bolster prices.

[Saudi Shi'ite protesters demand human rights reform](#)

(Reuters) - Some 200 Shi'ites protested in Saudi Arabia's oil-producing east Friday, calling for human rights reform and denouncing the demolition of Shi'ite mosques in nearby Bahrain, two activists told Reuters.

The gathering in the town of Awwamiya defied a call by leading Shi'ite clerics a day earlier for an end to two months of protests in the conservative kingdom's Eastern Province, in an apparent bow to government pressure.

[Syrian human rights group: 49 protesters killed in the bloodiest day of the uprising](#)

BEIRUT - A prominent Syrian human rights group says at least 49 people have been killed during pro-democracy protests — making Friday the deadliest day of the uprising.

Syrian security forces fired live bullets and tear gas Friday on rallies across the country.

[TNK-BP expelled from Russian gas association](#)

TNK-BP Management on Friday was expelled from the Russian Gas Producers Association but will not seek to restore its membership, a company spokesman said.

[Facing Backlog, US Oil And Gas Producers Building Service Sides](#)

HOUSTON -(Dow Jones)- The North American shale boom has led to months-long waiting lines for scarce oilfield equipment like drilling rigs and pumping trucks. As a result, companies like Chesapeake Energy Corp. are taking matters into their own hands.

[PG&E says it can't satisfy order for documentation](#)

Pacific Gas and Electric Co. told California regulators Thursday that it will never find documents for some of its older gas pipelines, and that if the state doesn't accept "assumptions" about some pipes, the company will have to spend five years shutting them down and testing them with high-pressure water.

[Coast Guard: Transocean's poor safety culture contributed to Deepwater Horizon disaster](#)

NEW ORLEANS - A Coast Guard probe of the Deepwater Horizon explosion has concluded that rig owner Transocean had serious flaws in its safety management system and a poor safety culture that contributed to the disaster.

Friday's report also found that lax oversight by the rig's flag state, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was ineffective in preventing the disaster.

[More Questions Than Answers on Dispersants a Year After Gulf Spill](#)

One word could describe U.S. EPA's oversight of BP PLC's decision to pour 1.84 million gallons of oil-dispersing chemicals into the Gulf of Mexico during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill: uncertain.

[Debate on Protecting Oil Rig Workers Takes a New Turn -- but Likely to Last a Long Time](#)

One year after the rig blast that spewed nearly 5 million barrels of crude into the Gulf of Mexico, offshore drilling regulators are moving forward with risk-management standards that had languished for more than 15 years before the disaster, and the oil industry is launching a deepwater safety center.

But even as the Obama administration prepares to release a second worker safety rule this summer, some experts warn that without regulatory vigilance, the new strategies could hand oil companies too much power to police their own day-to-day operations. That dialogue -- among academics, advocates, business and labor -- over how to limit the human errors that can cause fatal on- and offshore oil production accidents is just

beginning to play out on the Gulf gusher's first anniversary.

[Opportunities & Peril in the Gold-Food-Oil-QE Connection](#)

There is legitimate debate over when “peak oil” production will occur (or whether it has already), but there can be no dispute that actual production has been relatively flat – about 84 Million bbl/day for the last few years, notwithstanding new discoveries (e.g. off the coast of Brazil) and new technology for unlocking oil from shale (as e.g. in South Texas). Production from The relatively “Easy” Elephant Fields (e.g. Ghawar in Saudi Arabia and Canterrell off shore Mexico) and Reserves are diminishing significantly.

But the World’s Population is increasing by some 80 Million/Yr. with Much of that increase coming from the BRICs whose increasing affluence is increasing demand and, therefore, the Price of Food. But in the past few months, The Primary Factor in the dramatic Food and Energy Price Spikes we have seen is neither Oil Price Spikes nor increasing demand (though they have been and will be Major Causes over the long haul).

[Southern Co. To Restart Georgia Reactor After Replacing Parts](#)

NEW YORK -(Dow Jones)- Southern Co. said Friday that equipment failure didn't cause the emergency shutdown of a Georgia nuclear-power reactor and that the plant will be restarted after parts are replaced as a precaution.

[Georgia nuclear reactor shuts down; investigation underway](#)

Atlanta (CNN) -- A nuclear reactor at Georgia's Vogtle Electric Generating Plant has been taken off line indefinitely until investigators determine the cause of an automatic shutdown earlier this week, according to a statement released Friday by Southern Company, which supplies power to much of the state.

A plan to re-start the reactor, which has been in operation since 1987, will be implemented once the investigation has been completed.

[Fuel supply interrupted](#)

DUBAI: Despite inside reports that Emirates General Petroleum Corporation (Emarat) had restored fuel normal supply after days of emptiness, motorists were not getting it by on Thursday evening and the problem was catching up to some other pump stations of different labels.

“I had never had this experienced in more than five years I have lived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE),” said Salim K., an expatriate who said he was lucky to have his car fuelled on the fourth station of EPPCO after trying different fuel pump stations.

[Bids sought for Saudi-Kuwait oil project](#)

ALKHOBAR: A Saudi-Kuwaiti oil joint venture has asked construction firms to bid for offshore and onshore work at Hout, one of the oil fields shared by the two OPEC members, industry sources said.

[Gazprom Enters Bangladeshi Gas Sector](#)

Gazprom will drill five wells at different existing gas fields in Bangladesh in October and will soon help train Petrobangla employees, said a Bangladeshi official this week.

[The Big Grab series: Alberta's oil sands play dirty](#)

As ordinary Canadians dig deep to ease their carbon footprint, Alberta's oil-sands pollution wipes out their sacrifice.

[Fossil fuel firms use 'biased' study in massive gas lobbying push](#)

Senior executives in the fossil fuel industry have launched an all-out assault on renewable energy, lobbying governments and business groups to reject wind and solar power in favour of gas, in a move that could choke the fledgling green energy industry.

[Pennsylvania: the 'ground zero' of the US shale gas drilling boom](#)

Sitting atop a vast deposit of natural gas, Pennsylvania knows how lucrative – and dangerous – this rapidly expanding industry is. But how can it prevent large-scale environmental damage?

[Natural gas drilling is at a crucial turning point](#)

The industry must develop regulations that scale up drilling safely and learn from the mistakes made in the United States.

[Rex Tillerson, the Flying Wallenda](#)

A year after the BP Gulf of Mexico oil spill, Rex Tillerson is aggravated. What is upsetting the CEO of ExxonMobil, the biggest oil supermajor? His company is being mentioned in the same breath as BP and its lesser drillers, men who required *87 days* to cap the runaway Macondo oil well, while Tillerson's own team knew that the British company was frittering away precious time with faulty ideas for ending the crisis, Tillerson tells the Financial Times. Meanwhile, the whole industry's reputation was

going down the drain. Oh the injustice. Oh the calumny.

[Small Oil Cos Survive GOM's Deep Waters](#)

When the staggering costs of BP's deep-water Gulf of Mexico oil spill became clear, investors feared that small, independent oil and natural-gas producers would have to leave the area.

These companies, relatively small by energy-industry standards, didn't have pockets as deep as those of the big oil companies--a necessity in the event of another spill.

[Media moves too fast to do justice to stories that matter](#)

From April into the North American midsummer last year, the world watched BP's oil spewing from the sea floor into the Gulf of Mexico with outrage and guilt that came to feel like a chronic stomach ache.

Then, on July 15, it stopped. And within a couple of weeks the bad feelings for a lot of us stopped, too. There were reports that the surface oil was quickly disappearing. There was a government study that hopeful journalists misinterpreted to mean that most of the oil was gone.

But the oil was not gone, and it still is not; tar balls are washing around the gulf, marshes are dying. Scientists say it is still too early to know the full extent of the environmental damage.

[Oil spills underreported in Gulf of Mexico](#)

There is only one official source of data on pollution caused by offshore drilling in US waters: the National Response Center, an online reporting system for oil and chemical spills managed by the US Coast Guard. But watchdog groups say that the system's reliance on self-reporting means its data are fundamentally flawed.

[The feds' convenient oil market crackdown](#)

There goes Washington again, looking for fraud in all the wrong places.

[Noam Chomsky: Is the world too big to fail?](#)

Despite all the changes since, there is every reason to suppose that today's policy-makers basically adhere to the judgment of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's influential advisor A.A. Berle that control of the incomparable energy reserves of the Middle East would yield "substantial control of the world." And correspondingly, that

loss of control would threaten the project of global dominance that was clearly articulated during World War II, and that has been sustained in the face of major changes in world order since that day.

[Rising oil prices fuel other fears](#)

LIKE thousands of other families around Australia, the Noonans are heading off on their annual beach holiday during the Easter break.

This year, however, things will be different for banking executive Simon, wife Kate, and children Sam, 7, Poppy, 4, and Lulu, 2.

As petrol prices surge towards \$1.50 a litre in some parts of Australia, they will be catching a budget flight from Melbourne to Queensland instead of embarking on the long drive north.

[Rising gas prices, parts shortage fuel rush for smaller cars](#)

MILWAUKEE The wild and sometimes strange ride the U.S. auto industry has taken in recent years is heading toward another hairpin turn.

Where the number of vehicles once far outnumbered buyers, the opposite may occur later this summer as the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan creates parts shortages that affect production of some models. Meanwhile, rising fuel prices are driving up demand for smaller, fuel efficient vehicles.

"The pendulum has been all over the map during the last couple years for the industry," said Jeff Schuster, executive director of automotive forecasting for market research firm J.D. Power and Associates. "It's not swinging - it's come loose."

[Nissan Leaf: 2011 World Car of The Year](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney) -- The all-electric Nissan Leaf was named the 2011 World Car of The Year at the New York Auto Show on Thursday.

[Investment needed for innovative electric cars](#)

AUSTRALIA is in danger of being left behind by the rest of the world in the race to find an alternative to petrol-powered cars.

That's the view of the Greens deputy leader, Christine Milne, who is calling on the government to do more to support electric vehicles.

[Obama science adviser warns China could surpass U.S.](#)

PASADENA - President Obama's top science adviser warned a gathering at Caltech that tighter budgets for scientific research could give China an edge in developing emerging technologies.

In a wide-ranging speech at Caltech on Tuesday night, John Holdren, who heads the White House Office of Science and Technology, also talked about the hydra-headed challenge of energy and climate change.

[Chris Martenson on budget, corruption, economy, investing, energy, Japan nuclear crisis](#)

Chris Martenson joins David Pakman live in studio for a discussion about the budget, economic situation, Wall Street, corruption, energy, the Japanese nuclear crisis, and more.

[The Sustainable Development Hoax](#)

Oil may become depleted -- at least low-cost oil -- but its essential function is to produce energy. And there we have a variety of ways to create energy for many millennia or even longer -- based on nuclear fission.

[Writer Tells of Global Warming Dangers](#)

"Climate change is the biggest problem humans have ever dealt with," Bill McKibben, writer and environmentalist, said to a crowded Call Auditorium as a part of the 2011 Jill and Ken Iscol Distinguished Environmental Lecture on Thursday.

McKibben, who has been called the "world's best green journalist" by Time Magazine, discussed 350.org, his worldwide campaign against climate change, and the dangers of global warming.

[Wisdom from clear thinkers on the way ahead](#) (Dmitry Orlov and Catherine Austin Fitts)

Considered out of touch just a few years ago, these two clear thinkers' predictions have proven to be on the money. They offer an astute picture of the near future and practical advice on landing on our feet.

[Hubbert's Peak, The Coal Question and Climate Change](#)

Lecture by Prof. David Rutledge of Caltech titled "Hubbert's Peak, The Coal Question and Climate Change" delivered at The University of Adelaide on 18 April 2011.

[John Michael Greer - Alternatives to Nihilism, Part Two: Lead Us Away From Here](#)

It's easy enough to laugh, but there's much to be learned from the beliefs that are taken for granted by those who insist they take nothing for granted. The subject of today's post is one of those, one that's deeply entangled with the cult of nihilism I dissected in last week's essay. It's a credo that's embraced with equal enthusiasm straight across the political spectrum from left to right, and from the middle of the road out as far toward the fringes as you care to look. There are few better examples of groupthink in contemporary American life, and yet nearly all the people who accept the notions I have in mind are convinced that they're rebelling against conformity by conforming to a belief system shared by nearly everybody else in the country.

The credo in question? It's the belief that all the decisions that really matter in the United States today are made by a small elite, insulated from the democratic process, who are pursuing policies that would be rejected by the American people if the latter had the chance to make up their own minds.

[Don't Get Fooled Again: Writing Our Own Economic Future](#)

Still, though my club knew things needed to change, it was hard to imagine a large-scale vision of something different.

But it was easy to imagine how we could begin to change things in our own neighborhood: "What if we had a garden here at the church?" asked the pastor. "It would be something else for people to do, besides watch TV and shop. I'd need help, but we could do it. We could involve the teenagers at the community center and share all the food." Others chimed in: "Let's use Freecycle to find old things instead of buying new ones." "Let's set up a website to list recipe ideas and grocery saving tips and things we can share."

What's your vision for the new economy? What are you doing to turn it into a reality? There's so much to do: you can help organize a Common Security Club for your community; get involved in a Transition Initiative; build local resilience alongside your neighbors; take steps to increase your independence from Wall Street's phantom wealth traps by buying and investing locally.

[Iran vs. Iraq: Why Tehran is Nervous about Iraqi Oil](#)

Iran may have had a political boost from the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East — with some new regimes apparently more sympathetic toward Tehran while others brace themselves against the Iranian regime's influence among opposition movements in the region. But there is no attendant economic windfall to all the change. Indeed, the Islamic Republic, the second largest oil producer in OPEC, has come to be very concerned about petroleum.

Iranian oil ministry officials are worried that Tehran's clout will actually weaken in OPEC, which as a group decides on each member's maximum amount of oil output.

Current gulf rival Saudi Arabia is the heaviest hitter in the cartel; meanwhile, old rival Iraq has started to ramp up oil production. "When you talk to people internally, there is fear," says a veteran Tehran-based analyst who advises the government. "Now that Iraq has announced its expanded reserves, there is serious concern that our standing in OPEC has been damaged." That comes on news that Iran last year either lost or suffered reductions in contracts with many longtime business partners and traditional purchasers of its oil.

[Oil rises as dollar weakens](#)

NEW YORK – Oil rose on Thursday, as the dollar weakened and gas pump prices inched higher.

Benchmark West Texas Intermediate crude added 84 cents to settle at \$112.29 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. In London, Brent crude rose 14 cents to settle at \$123.99 per barrel.

[A Roman scholar puts oil prices in perspective](#)

As the world's population approaches 7 billion, supply is not keeping pace with demand for oil and its derivative products. Most of the biggest fields have already peaked and the rate of decline in oil production is accelerating. Experts also identified a chronic under-investment by oil-producing countries. Which way oil prices? High and up.

The flaw is that this views the world as a market, oil as a commodity, and the future as predictable. A sounder piece of advice comes from the Roman scholar Pliny the Elder, who stated that the only certainty is that nothing is certain.

[The oil situation could be worse than we thought...](#)

The Financial Times recently published an astonishing story that just isn't getting enough attention. I like to think of the FT as the newspaper The Wall Street Journal would like to be if it wasn't trying so hard to impress everyone with fancy Weekend sections and glossy magazine forays.

If you want to look distinguished, you might read the WSJ in public. But if you want to be informed, you'll also read the FT in private.

The story? The Saudis, as you may have heard, are increasing their social spending programs in an obvious attempt to deflate any "rebellious" ideas from their population.

[China energy agency sees 8 pct oil demand growth in 2011](#)

(Reuters) - The growth China's implied demand for refined oil products will slow to 8 percent this year, with total consumption of about 265 million tonnes, the National Energy Agency said in a statement on Friday.

[Thermal Coal's 30% Gain to Outpace Oil, Gas on Japan Quake](#)

Thermal coal may outpace oil and gas this year, rising more than 30 percent to a record, as demand from China and India accelerates and Japan boosts imports to make up for nuclear power lost after the March earthquake.

[Emirates imposes fuel surcharges of up to Dh1,040](#)

DUBAI // Emirates Airline has imposed a fuel surcharge of up to Dh1,040 for a return business-class ticket to the Americas, blaming the increases on rising oil prices.

[A really short blog](#)

"WE TOLD YOU SO!"

[Regulator calls meet as Reliance Industries lags gas target](#)

NEW DELHI (Reuters) – Reliance Industries is pumping 28 percent less gas than it should from its key block, the upstream regulator said, and will meet the company, which has just partnered with BP on field development, over the shortfall next month.

[Major LNG deal sparks environmental fears](#)

A major liquified natural gas (LNG) deal between Australia and China has environmentalists fearing for the future of the Great Artesian Basin.

Australia will supply China with a further 4.3 million tonnes of LNG each year for 20 years.

[Chesapeake stems flow from blown Pennsylvania gas well](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Chesapeake Energy has stemmed the flow of leaking drilling fluids from a natural gas well that suffered a blow-out late on Tuesday in Pennsylvania and prompted the company to suspend a controversial gas production technique in the state.

Chesapeake, one of Pennsylvania's biggest shale gas producers, used a mix of plastic, ground-up tires and heavy mud to plug the well -- an operation that echoes BP's "top

kill" effort to seal its ruptured Gulf of Mexico oil well last year.

[PG&E exec. resigns in wake of Calif pipeline blast](#)

SAN FRANCISCO – Pacific Gas & Electric Corp.'s top executive is stepping down following a "challenging year" that included a natural gas pipeline explosion in a San Francisco suburb that killed eight and left 38 homes destroyed, the company announced Thursday.

[Iraq has doubled its electricity capacity](#)

Iraq has doubled its electricity capacity over prewar levels, making dramatic headway in a critical benchmark that had plagued U.S. leaders and frustrated Iraqis since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

[Shanghai fuel protests unnerve Beijing](#)

The rising cost of diesel has sparked protests at several ports around Shanghai, at a time when Beijing is nervous that inflation and high oil prices could contribute to social unrest in China.

Truck drivers at the Shanghai port of Baoshan protested for a third day on Friday, demanding better pay and lower management fees from logistics companies and port authorities. Truckers have seen their incomes shrink as the cost of diesel rises, and they say shipping agents and authorities are imposing unreasonable fees.

[Syria: Assad troops 'fire on Friday prayers protesters'](#)

Syrian troops are reported to have opened fire on protesters as thousands marched after Friday prayers against President Bashar al-Assad's government.

At least three people were injured near Damascus, witnesses said, and reports said security forces opened fire near protesters in Homs and in Hama.

[U.S. Sends Predators to Strike Qaddafi Troops Fighting Rebels](#)

The U.S. sent armed Predator drones on missions over Libya and European allies dispatched military advisers in renewed efforts to help rebel fighters oust Muammar Qaddafi's regime without sending soldiers into combat.

U.S. Senator John McCain, a Vietnam War veteran and former presidential candidate who has supported military intervention in Libya, arrived in the rebel-held city of

Benghazi today to meet fighters, whom he called heroes, the Associated Press reported.

[Libya says NATO stops oil tanker: JANA](#)

Libya's state news agency JANA said NATO forces stopped on Thursday a Libyan oil tanker, adding the forces are dealing with its crew.

[Libyan turmoil has limited impact on China's energy supplies](#)

BEIJING - Unrest in Libya has had limited impact on China's energy supplies as domestic companies have found other sources of oil, an energy official said Friday.

[China's CNOOC says four oilfields shut by vessel malfunction](#)

(Reuters) - China's top offshore oil and gas producer, CNOOC Ltd., shut down operations at four oilfields in the Bohai Bay with total production capacity of about 39,000 barrels per day, due to a malfunction at a vessel, the company said on Friday.

[Egypt detains ex-energy minister for questioning](#)

CAIRO (Reuters) – Egypt's public prosecutor on Thursday ordered former energy minister Sameh Fahmy and five other senior energy officials detained for questioning into a natural gas deal with Israel the government is reviewing.

Israel gets 40 percent of its natural gas from Egypt under an arrangement put in place after a 1979 peace deal.

[BP pledges \\$1 billion to restore oil-stained Gulf](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) – BP has pledged \$1 billion to jump-start projects aimed at restoring the US Gulf Coast after last year's massive oil spill, officials said Thursday.

"The agreement in no way affects the ultimate liability of BP or any other entity for natural resource damages or other liabilities, but provides an opportunity to help restoration get started sooner," the US Justice Department said in a statement.

[Blame game: BP, Gulf spill partners sue each other](#)

MIAMI — After being hammered for a year over the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, BP is going on the offensive with multibillion-dollar lawsuits seeking to shift at least part of the

blame to those who owned the ill-fated rig or designed a failed safety device or supplied cement that didn't hold.

Those companies — Transocean, Cameron International and Halliburton — each filed lawsuits of their own, and it will now be up to the courts to divvy up fault.

[BP, Transocean spending more on lobbying](#)

WASHINGTON — A year after an explosion killed 11 workers and triggered the worst oil spill in U.S. waters, two companies at the center of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster intensified their spending heavily to influence federal policymakers, new lobbying reports show.

Oil giant BP spent \$2 million on federal lobbying efforts during the first three months of this year, a 25% increase over the same period in 2010.

[Companies temporarily extend LNP plant operations](#)

JUNEAU, Alaska - ConocoPhillips and Marathon Oil Corp. have agreed to extend operations at their Kenai liquefied natural gas plant until August to fulfill short-term contracts to Asia.

The companies said Wednesday that this doesn't affect their plans to mothball the plant. Rather, ConocoPhillips' Natalie Lowman said this was a case of the plant having the gas and the short-term market needing it.

[Ex-Amaranth Trader Hunter Is Fined \\$30 Million in Market-Manipulation Case](#)

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a \$30 million civil penalty against former Amaranth Advisors LLC energy trader Brian Hunter, who is accused of manipulating the natural-gas futures market in 2006.

The fine “is a sufficient deterrent” to discourage traders from engaging in market manipulation, FERC Chairman Jon Wellinghoff told reporters today at the agency's monthly meeting. Hunter has 30 days to pay or appeal, FERC said.

[Japan faces lengthy recovery from Fukushima accident](#)

Tokyo (CNN) -- The worst may have passed in the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl, but cleaning up when it's finally over is likely to take decades and cost Japan an untold fortune.

A six- to nine-month horizon for winding down the crisis, laid out by plant owner Tokyo

Electric Power this week, is just the beginning. Near the end of that timeline, Japan's government says it will decide when -- or whether -- the nearly 80,000 people who were told to flee their homes in the early days of the disaster can return.

[Evacuation zone to be widened](#)

Prime Minister Naoto Kan's government on Friday instructed parts of Fukushima Prefecture outside the 20-km no-go zone around the crippled No. 1 nuclear plant to evacuate by the end of May, saying that cumulative radiation levels may pose a health risk to residents.

The announcement came a day after the government declared the 20-km evacuation area a legally binding no-go zone, where unauthorized entry is subject to fines of up to ¥100,000 or possible detention for up to 30 days under a special nuclear emergency law.

[Japanese Revisit Nuclear Zone While They Can](#)

OKUMA, Japan — Residents who lived near the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant flocked to the area on Thursday ahead of a midnight evacuation deadline imposed by the government.

While they were greeted by the buckling roads and collapsed houses familiar to many Japanese in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami that wrought such destruction here on March 11, they faced the added burden that dangerous radiation levels from the Daiichi plant might mean they were saying goodbye to their homes for months or years. Some worried they would never return.

[Tepco Fails to Get Assurance on Restarting Second Fukushima Nuclear Plant](#)

Tokyo Electric Power Co., the company at the center of Japan's nuclear disaster, failed to get an assurance from Fukushima prefecture's governor that a second plant in the area can be restarted.

Tokyo Electric President Masataka Shimizu met Governor Yuhei Sato in the prefectural office in Fukushima city earlier today to apologize for the accident, said Katsuhiro Kiko, a spokesman at the local government. Shimizu, who was refused meetings with the governor on April 11 and March 22, outlined plans to bring the crisis under control.

Sato told reporters after the meeting that Tepco can't restart nuclear power plants without safety guarantees, according to Kiko.

[Japanese utility likely to survive nuclear crisis](#)

Some would consign the Tokyo utility embroiled in Japan's worst-ever nuclear plant disaster to the corporate graveyard.

[Japan to stick with nuclear power - ruling](#)

JAPAN will review its energy policy in light of the Fukushima atomic plant disaster but will stick with nuclear power, the secretary general of the centre-left ruling party said today.

[Nuclear dilemma: adequate insurance too expensive](#)

From the U.S. to Japan, it's illegal to drive a car without sufficient insurance, yet governments around the world choose to run over 440 nuclear power plants with hardly any coverage whatsoever.

Japan's Fukushima disaster, which will leave taxpayers there with a massive bill, brings to the fore one of the industry's key weaknesses -- that nuclear power is a viable source for cheap energy only if it goes uninsured.

[Chernobyl and Fukushima share wounds of disaster](#)

With the passage of time, Chernobyl has become well-explored territory. Guides take you through the nearest town, Pripyat, and they know exactly where to go — and more importantly — where not to.

[Chevrolet unveils 38-mpg eco version of new Malibu](#)

On the heels of the high-mileage version of its Cruze compact, Chevrolet said at the New York auto show here today that it will add a high-mpg version of the Malibu midsize as well. It will be called the Malibu Eco.

[Toyota: Output won't return to normal until end of year](#)

Toyota said today it won't be able to return all its models back to regular production until "November or December" in the U.S., Japan and around the world.

The announcement heightens the prospect that Toyota and its Lexus luxury division will run out of cars, or at least the most popular models, over the next few months. The output cuts are due to the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan.

[Faster than a speeding train, number of Amtrak riders soars in Flint](#)

FLINT, Michigan -- Dennis Jefferson noticed something on his Amtrak trip from Charleston, Miss., to Flint this week: There's a lot less elbow room and a lot more people on the train than there were just six months ago.

Fueled by higher gas prices and what state transportation officials say is greater awareness, the number of Amtrak riders has exploded on the Blue Water route that runs from Port Huron to Chicago and stops daily in Flint.

[Heating oil phase-out part of NYC clean-air plan](#)

NEW YORK – The city will phase out the use of polluting heavy oils to heat buildings and will begin building solar power plants on capped landfills, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Thursday in his first update to a 4-year-old environmental plan that aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 30 percent by 2030.

Under the plan, the phase-out of heavy oils from the city's boilers would start right away and be completed by the 2030 deadline. It would reduce the presence of airborne fine particulate matter, which the city says is killing 3,000 residents each year and forcing 6,000 to seek emergency asthma treatment.

[Study Finds Solar Panels Increase Home Values](#)

All those homeowners who have been installing residential solar panels over the last decade may find it was a more practical decision than they thought. The electricity generated may have cost more than that coming from the local power company (half of which, nationwide, comes from burning coal), but if they choose to sell their homes, the price premium they will get for the solar system should let them recoup much of their original capital investment.

[Transparent Photovoltaic Cells Turn Windows Into Solar Panels](#)

A new class of transparent photovoltaic cells has been developed that can turn an ordinary windowpane into a solar panel without impeding the passage of visible light, scientists said Tuesday.

The cells could one day transform skyscrapers into giant solar collectors, said Richard Lunt, one of the researchers on the project.

[Paraguay dividing over spending Brazilian millions](#)

ASUNCION, Paraguay – President Fernando Lugo is about to realize Paraguay's long-held dream of receiving millions of dollars more from Brazil for energy from their shared hydroelectric dam, money he promised would finance land reform and transform his impoverished, agrarian nation.

But now that the extra \$240 million a year is about to arrive, that campaign promise seems as difficult to fulfill as ever. The ex-Roman Catholic bishop appears incapable of keeping the money from being directed elsewhere by the entrenched political party that controls congress and ran Paraguay as its fiefdom for 61 years before his election in 2008.

[Earth Day 2011: How to make your impact](#)

Americans are going green this week in honor of Earth Day on Friday, April 22, and it couldn't come at a more appropriate time. This week also happens to be the one-year anniversary of the Gulf Coast oil spill, whose devastating after effects are still being felt.

To help make a positive impact on Mother Earth, here's a roundup of Earth Day-inspired resources, events and celebrations taking place nationwide:

[Beyond the Oil Spill, the Tragedy of an Ailing Gulf](#)

There is a huge dead zone off the mouth of the Mississippi, and coastal wetlands have been vanishing rapidly.

[For a Few, Focus on Green Products Pays Off](#)

Manufacturers who have long aligned themselves with environmental causes, like Seventh Generation and Method, have rebounded better from the recession than the "green" lines of larger, more traditional manufacturers.

Analysts say the reason is that the niche manufacturers tend to attract serious green customers who want products that are good for the environment even if they cost more. And if these customers find that a botanical ingredient isn't quite as effective as bleach, they believe it is better for their house and lungs.

[FTC to issue new green guidelines, address 'tsunami' of marketing claims](#)

The number of green labels that tout environmental virtues is proliferating, as are complaints about them, such as clothes labeled as "bamboo" that are actually rayon.

Help may be on the way. The Federal Trade Commission is updating its guidelines this year for environmental claims, and the U.S. government now requires, as of January, that all products bearing its Energy Star logo undergo third-party testing to prove they're more efficient than regular items. Previously, it required testing of only some products.

[Pesticide exposure in womb linked to low IQ](#)

The Berkeley study found that the most heavily exposed children scored an average of 7 points lower on IQ tests compared with children with the lowest pesticide exposures, lead author Brenda Eskenazi says.

[A City Built on Oil Discovers How Precious Its Water Can Be](#)

MIDLAND — The oil business is booming, but there is something more precious in Midland right now: water.

Since the beginning of October, barely one-tenth of an inch of rain has fallen on the city, the oil and gas capital of West Texas. Two of the three reservoirs that Midland and other Permian Basin cities rely on for most of their water are getting close to empty. The third is below 30 percent of capacity.

This month, for the first time, Midland imposed water restrictions, forcing homeowners to water their lawns less, and schools to let their football fields grow scrubby.

If the rain does not start soon, “it’s going to get bad,” said Stuart Purvis, the utilities manager for Midland.

[Science and policy can catalyze each other, EPA head says](#)

Technological innovations have the ability to change environmental policies just as much as those policies can affect innovation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa P. Jackson said during a visit to MIT on Friday, Apr. 15. In delivering the annual Henry W. Kendall Memorial Lecture, Jackson urged students and faculty at the Institute to look for sustainable solutions to environmental problems.

[Recession cut EU CO2 emissions by record 7.2%](#)

Recession drove European Union CO2 emissions down by a record 7.2% in 2009, putting the bloc ahead of its climate goals, a report released this week (20 April) by the European Environment Agency (EEA) says.

[Fewer Americans, Europeans View Global Warming as a Threat](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Gallup surveys in 111 countries in 2010 find Americans and Europeans feeling substantially less threatened by climate change than they did a few years ago, while more Latin Americans and sub-Saharan Africans see themselves at risk.

[Ex-climate chief calls for private sector seat at UN talks](#)

Yvo de Boer, the former UN climate chief, has called for the private sector to participate in international negotiations about the financing of the yearly \$100 billion Green Climate Fund. He spoke to EurActiv in an exclusive interview.

[Reducing sprawl doesn't require a heavy hand](#)

There is one policy instrument that raises the cost of suburban development without hurting local landowners: Transferable Development Rights (TDR's). This instrument has been successfully tried in the U.S. and our governments could improve on their experience. TDR's allow the sale of development rights from a protected area to areas suitable for densification.

[Ozone hole has dried Australia, scientists find](#)

The Antarctic ozone hole is about one-third to blame for Australia's recent series of droughts, scientists say.

Writing in the journal Science, they conclude that the hole has shifted wind and rainfall patterns right across the Southern Hemisphere, even the tropics.

Their climate models suggest the effect has been notably strong over Australia.

Many parts of the country have seen drought in recent years, with cities forced to invest in technologies such as desalination, and farms closing.

[Scientists: Soot may be key to rapid Arctic melt](#)

WASHINGTON – An international research team is in the land of snow and ice, in search of soot. Though the Arctic is often pictured as a vast white wasteland, scientists believe a thin layer of soot – mostly invisible – is causing it to absorb more heat. They want to find out if that's the main reason for the recent rapid warming of the Arctic, which could have a long-term impact on the world's climate.

Soot, or black carbon, is produced by auto and truck engines, aircraft emissions, burning forests and the use of wood- or coal-burning stoves.

[We must halt the explosion in population to offer decent life for all, says Sir David Attenborough](#)

Sir David Attenborough has warned that population growth must be stopped in order to offer a 'decent life' for all.

The wildlife broadcaster said people were shying away from accepting that the world's resources cannot sustain current levels of population growth.

‘There cannot be more people on this Earth than can be fed,’ he writes in the New Statesman.

...He warned of a ‘perfect storm of population growth, climate change and peak oil production’, leading to ‘insecurity in the supply of food, water and energy’.



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