



Drumbeat: May 4, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on May 4, 2011 - 10:15am

[Paying for gas forces painful sacrifices](#)

"Gas prices are like Chinese water torture for consumers," said Mark Cooper, Director of Research at the Consumer Federation of America. "The problem is, once you buy your car and once you buy your house your gasoline consumption is pretty much set," he said.

"If the price goes up, people have real difficulty cutting back, and that means they will have to find other areas to cut back which are more discretionary." 0:00 / 4:44GM CEO: \$4.50 gas would cut deep

For Robyn Fehring, that means taking her four-year-old daughter out of school one day a week. "My daughter had to be cut back a full day in preschool, because we simply cannot afford to take her," Fehring said. "She'll ask me why she can't go to school today and I feel terrible about it because she doesn't understand."

[Alaska's Peak Oil Realities](#)

I know we typically look at the trouble our three largest oil-producing states are having with Peak Oil.

Today, let's focus on just one: Alaska.

Because quite frankly, they're having a lot more trouble than the rest.

[Huhne defends oil tax hike](#)

Energy Secretary Chris Huhne tonight defended the coalition's tax hike on North Sea oil amid warnings that it has hit investment.

Mr Huhne said the Government could not afford to ignore the sharp increase in oil prices as it struggled to balance the books.

The "trigger" mechanism promised by Chancellor George Osborne also meant the levy would reduce if costs fell again.

[Russia Removes Tax Breaks And BP Suffers](#)

The Russian government recently decided to cancel tax breaks for several oil fields in East Siberia as of May 1. The tax breaks were provided for oil exports from the region.

[Occidental Oil Workers In Colombia Threaten To Strike](#)

BOGOTA -(Dow Jones)- Unionized workers for Occidental Petroleum Corp. in Colombia are threatening a work stoppage that could halt production at the 90,000-barrel-a-day Cano Limon oil field, a union leader said Wednesday.

[Sweeping Reform Attempt Could Shake Up Nigeria's Oil Industry](#)

Nigeria is Africa's largest oil-producing state, producing more than 2 million barrels per day of light crude. With proven oil reserves of 37.2 billion barrels (along with undeveloped natural gas reserves of 5,200 billion cubic meters), Nigeria can sustain this daily volume of production for many years to come. But the country's oil and natural gas sector has been rife with corruption, burdened by decaying infrastructure and inadequate refining capacity and vulnerable to militant violence. While the latter appears under control for the time being, the former have yet to be fully addressed. Any attempt to reform the industry would affect output projections, and thus is an important development not only for Nigeria but also for international oil and natural gas markets.

[Govt may OK hikes in power rates](#)

The government and the Democratic Party of Japan have begun moving toward allowing Tokyo Electric Power Co. to raise electricity rates to finance the massive compensation payments the utility will need to make due to the crisis at its Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, according to sources.

TEPCO will likely have to pay compensation of several trillion yen, and plans to raise funds through restructuring its business and using corporate profits. But the government was prompted to let the utility giant raise electricity rates because these efforts are expected to fall short of raising the necessary funds. The government and the DPJ would include the rate hikes in an envisaged compensation scheme that would ask other electric power firms to contribute financially, the sources said.

[Video from inside Fukushima Daiichi reactor](#)

Tokyo Electric Power Company released video showing a Fukushima Daiichi reactor. The video, captured by a U.S.-made robot, reveals no water leaks, but radiation levels are higher than were anticipated.

[Saudi unlikely to lift oil output quickly: analysts](#)

AFP - Saudi Arabia is unlikely to boost oil production quickly to ease the rise of crude prices, because it needs high prices for its own increased spending, analysts at an international banking think tank said Tuesday.

After producing 8.6 million barrels a day in 2010, the world's leading oil supplier will only kick up production to about 8.9 million barrels this year, said analysts at the Washington-based Institute of International Finance.

They said Riyadh needs the higher prices to offset its sharp increase in spending, an effort aimed in part at assuaging Saudis amid a surge in public unrest across the Middle East and North Africa.

[Saudi Aramco highlights spending plans](#)

Argus reported that Saudi state owned oil firm Saudi Aramco is expected to accelerate development of its Manifa heavy oil field as part of its USD 125 billion capital spending plan for the next 5 years.

A Saudi oil analyst said that a planned rise in the number of drilling rigs at the offshore Manifa development suggests that Aramco is bringing forward the completion date of a second 400,000 barrels per day phase to 2014 from 2024. It has informed contractors drilling wells at Manifa which will produce Arab Heavy crude that the rig count at the field will rise to around 20 from eight over the coming year. Eight rigs are already drilling extensively at Manifa as part of its first 500,000 barrels per day capacity phase at the field in 2013. The extra 12 rigs are unlikely to be needed simply to complete this phase.

[Saudi Aramco ahead with plans](#)

Saudi Aramco is pressing ahead with additional exploration targeting conventional natural gas reserves and is also studying the potential of Saudi Arabia's unconventional resources.

Saad Turaiki, vice president of production at the Saudi Arabian state-owned giant, speaking at OTC yesterday said Aramco is on track to meet its current target of being able to produce 15.5 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas by 2015.

[Saudi Aramco raises OSPs for Asia](#)

Riyadh: Saudi Aramco, the world's largest oil exporter, has raised official selling prices (OSPs) for most crude grades to customers in Asia for June shipments and increased the formula for light blends to US customers.

[Lester Brown: Water Shortages Threaten Food Future in the Arab Middle East](#)

After the Arab oil-export embargo of the 1970s, the Saudis realized that since they were heavily dependent on imported grain, they were vulnerable to a grain counter-embargo. Using oil-drilling technology, they tapped into an aquifer far below the desert to produce irrigated wheat. In a matter of years, Saudi Arabia was self-sufficient in wheat, its principal food staple.

But after more than 20 years of wheat self-sufficiency, the Saudis announced in January 2008 that this aquifer was largely depleted and they would be phasing out wheat production. Between 2007 and 2010, the wheat harvest of nearly 3 million tons dropped by more than two thirds. At this rate the Saudis likely will harvest their last wheat crop in 2012 and then be totally dependent on imported grain to feed their Canada-sized population of nearly 30 million people.

[Lester Brown: The New Geopolitics of Food](#)

In the United States, when world wheat prices rise by 75 percent, as they have over the last year, it means the difference between a \$2 loaf of bread and a loaf costing maybe \$2.10. If, however, you live in New Delhi, those skyrocketing costs really matter: A doubling in the world price of wheat actually means that the wheat you carry home from the market to hand-grind into flour for chapatis costs twice as much. And the same is true with rice. If the world price of rice doubles, so does the price of rice in your neighborhood market in Jakarta. And so does the cost of the bowl of boiled rice on an Indonesian family's dinner table.

Welcome to the new food economics of 2011: Prices are climbing, but the impact is not at all being felt equally. For Americans, who spend less than one-tenth of their income in the supermarket, the soaring food prices we've seen so far this year are an annoyance, not a calamity. But for the planet's poorest 2 billion people, who spend 50 to 70 percent of their income on food, these soaring prices may mean going from two meals a day to one. Those who are barely hanging on to the lower rungs of the global economic ladder risk losing their grip entirely. This can contribute -- and it has -- to revolutions and upheaval.

[IMF sounds alarm over rising food, fuel prices](#)

The International Monetary Fund is warning that poverty levels will rise in Africa, unless the current spike in food and fuel prices is arrested.

[Oil Scarcity and its impact on the Global Economy](#)

In the latest edition of the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook publication, the IMF dedicates a chapter entitled "[Oil Scarcity, Growth and Global Imbalances](#)" to an examination of the world's oil markets and the impact of growing oil

scarcity on the world's economy. In this document, the IMF seeks to answer the current status of oil scarcity, how oil scarcity will impact the global economy and how oil scarcity will impact economic policies around the world.

Now that the price of both Brent and West Texas Intermediate seem solidly positioned above \$100 per barrel for the first time since 2008, this is a timely study. Demand for oil has risen and, for some major consumers such as China, consumption levels have reached new records. Since oil is central to the world's economy, the impact of oil price volatility is key to economic growth and security. While oil prices have risen and fallen over the past 4 decades, it is only now that the issue of looming oil scarcity is becoming increasingly discussed.

[Chemistry and our diet by 2020](#)

Any change in our diets between now and 2020 will come down to a mixture of demographic, societal, economic, and scientific developments. The global population continues to grow and the fraction of the global population with more disposable income to spend on foods is increasing, particularly in Asia and South America. Consequently, the world will have to grow more food and use the food produced more efficiently. This will put an increasing strain on limited global resources, such as land, water and energy. Science and technology will play a key role in increasing the quantity and quality of foods available, and in ensuring that they are preserved, transported, and used efficiently.

[Russian April Inflation Quickens for First Time in 3 Months on Food, Fuel](#)

Russian inflation accelerated in April for the first time in three months to match the fastest pace since October 2009 as higher food prices and gasoline shortages fanned cost pressures.

[Rising river causes fears of gas shortage](#)

(WMC-TV) - Many fears rise with the river level and some people are afraid floods may shut off the flow of gasoline.

Prices at the pump cause enough concern these days and now there are fears the rising Mississippi River may impact production and possibly lead to a shortage of fuel.

[Fuel Shortage Adds to Many Problems in Unrest-Hit Yemen](#)

Long queues of cars have lately been seen at the filling stations in most of Yemen's cities due to an acute petrol shortage which adds to the many problems and shortages caused by the months-long unrest.

Many filling stations were closed down in the capital Sana'a and the business capital Aden, and there were reports that the Yemen Petroleum Company circulated that the

filling stations, still open, should fill in only 30 liters of petrol per car.

[Vietnam: Fuel price speculators to be penalised](#)

BINH PHUOC — The local authorities in southern Binh Phuoc Province launched inspections to prevent petrol station operators speculating in fuel, following shortages over the long weekend.

Violators would have their licences revoked, provincial Department of Industry and Trade director Tran Van Uy said.

The move was made following information that petrol stations had closed or refused to sell petrol in the belief that fuel shortages would lead to a price rise.

[State blames marketers for artificial fuel shortage](#)

The situation forced many Kenyans to walk to and from work after public service vehicle operators pulled out their vehicles due to the shortage.

The few that were operating took advantage by hiking fares by as much as 70 per cent.

By last evening hundreds of commuters were stranded within the city centre for lack of transport.

[Kenyans queue for fuel](#)

Long queues formed in Nairobi and its outskirts Wednesday as a crippling fuel shortage continued to bite.

Motorists were turned away from most oil stations for lack of petrol and diesel, while others patiently waited for their turn to fuel their cars.

[Pakistan: Protest against prolonged load shedding](#)

SIALKOT (PPI): The hundreds of the industrial workers, traders and industrialists, today, staged a big agitational demonstration near Small Industrial Estate Sialkot and they kept blocked the main Shahabpura Road for about two hours by burning the tyres on the road as a protest against the unending prolonged power outages in Sialkot.

[Circular debt, gas shortage behind outages: Pepco](#)

LAHORE: It is the Circular debt and gas shortage and not the dwindling generation that

are the main reasons for the unprecedented loadshedding that had troubled the people in the month of April this year. This disclosure was made by Rasul Khan Mehsood, Managing Director Pakistan Electric Power Company (Pepco), while talking to the media here at the Wapda House on Tuesday.

[World LPG supply dwindles on increased sales to Japan](#)

The Energy Ministry is preparing measures to cope with fuel shortages caused by Japan's nuclear power crisis.

Since the March 11 earthquake and tsunami shut down nuclear plants, Japan has been buying other types of fuel, especially liquefied natural gas (LNG), from around the globe to substitute for nuclear energy, prompting concerns in other countries including Thailand about a possible shortage of fuels.

[Petrobras pre-salt break-even drops](#)

Estimates from Petrobras of the break-even point for producing crude from the Santos basin pre-salt have dipped to an international oil price of between \$35 and \$40 barrels.

Improvements in drilling in the pre-salt environment and rising well productivity have reduced costs by almost half compared with 2008 estimates, the state-controlled company said.

[Strike halts Nexen Yemen flows](#)

Canadian independent Nexen is reported to have halted production at its Hadramout oilfield in southern Yemen due to a worker strike, adding to the already disrupted output from the country.

[Osama bump? Dead schmed, say oil traders. Long live Ben Bernanke](#)

Osama bin Ladin is dead. So why haven't oil and gasoline prices moderated? We are paying \$4.25 a gallon for regular gasoline here in Washington, D.C., much less than the \$8 and more a gallon that Europeans face, but still a lot for us. At first, prices tried to go down after the slaying Sunday -- oil prices dropped overnight and into yesterday morning as traders (the folks whose casino behavior helps to determine prices) saw Osama's death as a reason for optimism. But then their opinion abruptly turned: Traders callously recalculated and decided that Bin Ladin and the group he fathered -- al Qaeda -- now rarely if ever threaten oil supplies, and sent prices back up.

[Oil Supply: An Oil Independent USA...](#)

The simple and accurate answer to the question is a simple NO – the US. can't become oil energy independent – no matter how much and where we drill. Some of the reasons why I believe this to be true are presented below.

[Saudi interests in bid for German refinery-report](#)

HAMBURG (Reuters) - A group of investors including a Saudi Arabian trust is interested in purchasing the Wilhelmshaven oil refinery in Germany put up for sale by U.S. group ConocoPhillips, a German radio station reported on Wednesday.

[Nord Stream reaches new milestone](#)

The laying of the first Nord Stream gas pipeline, that will deliver natural gas from Russia to Germany, is set to be completed on Thursday, with a transfer to commercial operations still on schedule for October.

[Pemex Quarterly Profit Almost Triples on Surge in Oil Prices](#)

Petroleos Mexicanos, Latin America's largest oil producer, said quarterly profit rose to the highest since June 2008 as crude prices increased.

[The Inconvenient Truth of Vermont's Oil Speculation](#)

In the current regulatory environment, the Green Mountain State is included in those who are defined as speculators. They provide the corpus -- the money -- as investments in hedge funds and commodity indices. In effect, Sen. Sanders is mad with the labor unions and civil service employee retirement plans -- the largest investors in the asset class known as Managed Futures -- what some like to call speculators.

[Top 5 myths about subsidies to oil companies](#)

Of course, America needs the oil. But to claim that the industry does much else for the domestic economy in exchange for all the taxpayer support they enjoy is just one of the myths the oil lobby has spun over the years.

To set the record straight, here's our take on all the things that the industry warns that we'll lose if we finally cut their handouts this time.

Don't be scared. Instead, be very, very un-scared.

[Hanford group questions nuclear waste storage](#)

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) -- A Hanford group is asking the Energy Department questions about the cost of storing high-level radioactive waste in the absence of a federal repository.

[China as Number One? Don't bet your bottom dollar](#)

In the wake of World War II, with the collapse of the Japanese and German empires, only two powers worthy of the name were left, each so mighty that together they would be called "superpowers." After 1991, only one remained, so seemingly powerful that it was sometimes termed a "hyperpower" and many believed it had inherited the Earth.

What if, in fact, the U.S. was indeed the last empire? What if a world of rivalries, on a planet heading into resource scarcity, turned out to be less than imperial in nature? Or what if -- and think of me as a devil's advocate here -- this turned out not to be an imperial world of bitter rivalries at all, but in the face of unexpectedly tough times, a partnership planet?

[Bill Gates: 'Cute' Green Tech Won't Solve Energy Crisis](#)

Microsoft founder Bill Gates on Tuesday warned rich nations of the limitations of "cute" energy-efficient technologies, like individual solar panels, and advised spending more money on R&D to make energy cheaper for developing countries.

[Guam must reduce reliance on oil](#)

There is much debate in the field as to where we lay in the peak oil continuum. Has oil peaked yet? Is the peak near? Is the peak in the very distant future? This discussion is one factor that is fueling the renewable energy movement around the world.

With nearly 99 percent of our lives dependent on imported oil, Guam is very susceptible to changes in the oil market. Natural disasters, conflicts, wars, unrest in oil-producing countries, and the cost of extraction all put stress on the oil industry, either directly (reduced exports from oil-producing countries or deep water drilling disasters) or indirectly (decreased nuclear energy production in Japan equals a need for more oil-based energy).

[Millennium Consumption Goals— plus An Update](#)

1. Halve obesity and overweight rates by 2020 (we're starting the MCGs later than the MDGs). This will reduce mortality, morbidity, and economic costs, as well as reduce ecological pressures driven by overconsumption of food.

2. Halve the work week from the current 40+ hour per week to 20 hours per week. This will better distribute jobs, wealth, promote healthier living, and reduce economic activity, which is essential in our ecologically taxed world. For a good paper on this topic,

read New Economic Foundation's excellent report 21 Hours.

[Sharing, borrowing and bartering go high-tech](#)

Knocking on your neighbor's door to borrow a cup of sugar and sticking around to chat is a ritual as comforting as an old sweater. Neighborly folks, take note — socializing and sharing with neighbors has taken on some high-tech twists.

Websites that connect people who are interested in borrowing, bartering or buying used instead of new are gaining in popularity. Trendspotters have even given the phenomenon a name: collaborative consumption. And they say it's hitting home with consumers because it saves money while connecting them with like-minded folks.

[Not Production, Not Consumption, but Transformation](#)

Well-established words can be misleading. In economics “production and consumption” are such common terms that it is easy to forget that they do not really mean what they literally say. Physically we do not produce anything; we just use energy to rearrange matter into a more useful form. Production really means transformation of what is already here. Likewise, consumption merely reflects the disarrangement of carefully structured materials by the wear and tear of use into a less useful form — another transformation, this time from useful product into worn out product and waste. Of course one might say that we are producing and consuming “value” or “utility”, not really physical things. However, value is always added to something physical, namely resources, by labor and capital, which are also physical things ultimately made from the same low-entropy energy and materials that go into products. Nor does the service sector escape physical dimensions — services are always rendered by something or somebody. To abstract from physical dimensions and focus only on utility is to throw out the baby and pour bathwater on the diaper.

[Future of farming topic of rural economy forum](#)

The farmland preservation forum called Renewing Rural Economies was hosted by the Ontario Farmland Trust at the Arboretum Center at the University of Guelph. It brought together planning professionals, economic developers and farmers to discuss new development opportunities in agriculture.

"I think we need to continue this dialogue at home and allow more input from rural people on how we are going to plan our future," said Sean McGivern, owner of Saugeen Specialty Grains and Grassroots Organics in Desboro. McGivern attended representing the National Farmers Union. He suggested issues like the approach of peak oil, the lack of skilled labour in the agricultural sector and keeping youth on the farm are important topics for communities to discuss. "What type of economy do we want to have? We haven't really visioned what we want in the future."

[The Internet: One big power suck](#)

In a way, for energy producers, the huge increase in usage by companies like Google and Facebook is a godsend. Electricity demand from many industrial clients has dropped by up to 20% over the last few years, largely due to the recession and greater efficiency.

Tech sector growth "has helped make that decrease not so bad," said Steve Rosenstock, an engineer at the Edison Electric Institute, the utility trade association.

The electricity needed to power and cool the millions of servers that make the Internet hum has grown by more than 10% a year for the last decade, Rosenstock said. It now accounts for about 2% of all the electricity consumed in the United States.

[Oil hovers near \\$111 after US crude supply jump](#)

SINGAPORE – Oil prices hovered near \$111 a barrel Wednesday in Asia as a report showed U.S. crude supplies rose more than expected last week, suggesting growth in demand could be waning.

...The American Petroleum Institute said late Tuesday that crude inventories rose 3.2 million barrels last week, more than the increase of 1.7 million barrels predicted by analysts surveyed by Platts, the energy information arm of McGraw-Hill Cos.

Inventories of gasoline rose by 657,000 barrels while distillates fell 1.5 million barrels, the API said. Before last week's gain, U.S. gasoline inventories had fallen the previous three weeks.

[U.S. becomes net fuel exporter](#)

NEW YORK (UPI) -- The United States for the first time in nearly 20 years has become a net exporter of fuel as domestic consumers face with high gasoline prices, data indicate.

Records from the U.S. Energy Department indicate that the United States, the world's biggest consumer of oil, exported more gas than it purchased from the global market for the first time in years.

[IEA wants more crude from OPEC](#)

VIENNA (UPI) -- The world's biggest oil cartel needs to start producing more crude oil to drive prices down on the energy market, the International Energy Agency said.

[IEA advises, look to other oil sources](#)

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has suggested that Thailand should reduce the risk of energy shortages by seeking oil from other sources instead of relying on the Middle East, Energy Minister Wannarat Channukul said on Wednesday.

[6 apps to save you money on gas](#)

As gas prices continue to rise, these apps and sites are here to help -- in ways that go above and beyond simply locating the cheapest gas.

[Rental car gas prices hit more than \\$9 a gallon](#)

The price of gasoline has reached more than \$9 a gallon for drivers who don't pay ahead of time and who return their rental cars without a full tank.

[Act now on peak oil or curtail mobility, says Commission](#)

The European Commission's director-general for transport and mobility policy has warned at a conference on peak oil that it would be a "fatal mistake" for the EU to postpone measures to reduce oil dependency.

"If action is delayed, in the not-too-distant future we may be forced to drastically reduce all our mobility and import technological solutions from other part of the world," Marjeta Jager told a Green Party conference in the European Parliament.

[Obama Won't Hear Carter Echo as Gasoline Prices May Ease During Campaign](#)

Soaring gasoline prices have eroded President Barack Obama's job-approval ratings and exposed him to political attacks even as futures markets, the chairman of the Federal Reserve and some analysts say prices may soon peak.

[Big Oil to Obama: Hands off our tax breaks](#)

NEW YORK (CNMoney) -- The oil industry launched another assault Tuesday in the battle to protect favorable tax rates for energy producers.

The industry's chief lobbyist in Washington, Jack Gerard, president and chief executive of the American Petroleum Institute, said raising taxes on the oil and gas companies would stifle job growth and do nothing to lower gasoline prices.

[Senate to act on energy legislation this month](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – The Senate may vote on bills this month to promote clean energy and small nuclear reactors, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said on Tuesday.

Congress and the White House are under pressure to fight soaring fuel costs, which are cutting into consumer spending and threatening an economic recovery.

[Bolivia Plans Gas Concessions for First Time Since Seizures](#)

Bolivia plans to award oil and natural-gas exploration contracts this year in a bid to lure back foreign investments five years after President Evo Morales seized fields and refineries, the state oil company said.

[Qaddafi's Forces Bombard Rebel Cities as Allies Prepare for Rome Meeting](#)

Libyan forces loyal to Muammar Qaddafi bombarded rebel-held cities in the west of the country as ministers from 22 nations prepared to meet in Rome to discuss ways of resolving the conflict.

[Detroit automakers make big sales gains](#)

Detroit's Big 3 automakers made big gains last month as auto sales rose overall despite soaring gas prices.

General Motors saw a 26.6% increase, Ford Motor gained 16.3%, and Chrysler Group sales were up 22.5% in April compared with April 2010, Autodata reported Tuesday.

In a sign that consumers may not be panicking over gas prices edging above \$4 a gallon in a growing number of states, automakers say their smallest, gas-thrifiest vehicles were not necessarily the biggest sellers. Rather, they say, families were putting practicality before fuel economy.

[Russia, China clash over oil price, supply](#)

MOSCOW - When self-proclaimed strategic allies like Russia and China fail to see eye to eye, they do their best to mask their differences, issuing communiques promising amicable solutions at the next round of negotiations, or the one after that. If Moscow and Beijing fall out, the cordiality dries up, and the mutual silence can be deafening.

But not this time round. Just four months since the first Russian crude oil started pumping into Daqing, the northeastern Chinese oil town, Russian pipeline company Transneft has charged China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) with violating their supply contract and is threatening to open court proceedings in London.

['Iran will merge energy ministries'](#)

Iran will merge its oil and energy ministries, one of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's deputies said today, signalling a shake-up of the department in charge of the world's fifth-biggest crude exports.

[Chevron to buy new stakes in Marcellus shale](#)

(Reuters) - Chevron Corp (CVX.N) will buy 228,000 acres in the Marcellus Shale, expanding its position in the one of the hottest natural gas shale fields under development in the United States.

[BP Faces Huge Fine For 2006 Oil Spill](#)

A \$25 million fine slapped on BP for 2006 oil spills in the North Slope of Alaska is as a warning to pipeline operators in the United States, a regulator said.

BP Exploration Alaska Inc. is to pay \$25 million in civil penalties and was ordered to implement a system-wide pipeline management program in response to a 2006 oil spill from pipelines on the North Slope.

[Nuclear to stay in energy mix: Ferguson](#)

Nuclear power will continue to play an important part in the energy mix for some countries, Resources and Energy Minister Martin Ferguson says.

Recent problems with the Fukushima power plants in Japan, following the recent earthquake and tsunami, had prompted a re-assessment of the nuclear industry, Mr Ferguson said.

[U.S. lawmakers target ethanol subsidies](#)

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- A bill introduced by a bipartisan panel of U.S. lawmakers aims to get rid of tax credits for companies blending ethanol into gasoline, backers of the bill said.

U.S. Sens. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and Tom Coburn, R-Okla., aim to eliminate the 45 cent per gallon tax credit for refiners to blend ethanol into gasoline.

Feinstein in a statement said ethanol is the only part of the energy sector protected by what she said was a "triple crown" of government regulation -- its use is required by law, protected by tariffs and the U.S. government pays companies to use the fuel product.

[Economic Studies of Biofuels Paint Opposing Pictures in Gas Price Wars](#)

Both sides in the debate over government biofuels support are looking to bolster their arguments with numbers, as new, warring economic studies present differing figures on the role that ethanol production plays in gasoline pricing.

[US wind power strategy won't be stymied by warming climate](#)

With the greening of the US economy absolutely essential for any hope of heading off global warming at the pass, wind power is going to have to play a much bigger role in the country's power generation. But what happens when global warming and wind power mix - is it possible that climate change will take the breeze out of the sails of wind power, as it changes the patterns of weather in the US? Thankfully not, if a new paper published in this week's Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences is on the right track.

[Climate Activists Target States With Lawsuits](#)

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) – A group of attorneys using children and young adults as plaintiffs plans to file legal actions in every state and the District of Columbia on Wednesday in an effort to force government intervention on climate change.

The courtroom ploy is backed by high-profile activists looking for a legal soft spot to advance a cause that has stumbled in the face of stiff congressional opposition and a skeptical U.S. Supreme Court.

[Arctic ice is melting faster than expected, report says](#)

STOCKHOLM — Arctic ice is melting faster than expected and could raise the average global sea level by as much as five feet this century, an authoritative new report suggests.

The study by the international Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program, or AMAP, is one of the most comprehensive updates on climate change in the Arctic, and builds on a similar assessment in 2005.

[Survivor of Dust Bowl Now Battles a Fiercer Drought](#)

BOISE CITY, Okla. — While tornadoes and floods have ravaged the South and the Midwest, the remote western edge of the Oklahoma Panhandle is quietly enduring a weather calamity of its own: its longest drought on record, even worse than the Dust Bowl, when incessant winds scooped up the soil into billowing black clouds and rolled it through this town like bowling balls.

[‘The Big Thirst’: The Future of Water](#)

We just assume when we turn on the tap, the water will be there, and that the water system buried in the ground is doing fine.

Both assumptions are out of date. Population growth, economic development (which changes dramatically how much water people want and use), and climate change are all putting pressure on water supplies — not just in places like Las Vegas or California, but in Atlanta, in Florida, in Spain, across China.

We are going to have to move from an era of unconscious water abundance to an era of smart water — using water smartly (why do we water the azaleas, or flush our toilets, with purified drinking water?), and also modernizing and updating our creaky water systems. They were advanced technology 100 years ago. Now those systems struggle to keep up with our needs, and struggle for resources.

[‘Anti-Environmental’ House Freshman Leads Charge Against Obama’s Clean Water Agenda](#)

"When the hog market went south and times were tough, we were all focused on staying in business, paying the bills and paying employees," the avuncular Gibbs said during an interview in his new, third-floor office in the Cannon building. "When we're making some money, we could focus on maybe improving waterways."

The bottom line: "When you're not making money, you've got to try to stay in business."

[U.N. Forecasts 10.1 Billion People by Century’s End](#)

The population of the world, long expected to stabilize just above 9 billion in the middle of the century, will instead keep growing and may hit 10.1 billion by the year 2100, the United Nations projected in a report released Tuesday.

Growth in Africa remains so high that the population there could more than triple in this century, rising from today’s one billion to 3.6 billion, the report said — a sobering forecast for a continent already struggling to provide food and water for its people.

The new report comes just ahead of a demographic milestone, with the world population expected to pass 7 billion in late October, only a dozen years after it surpassed 6 billion. Demographers called the new projections a reminder that a problem that helped define global politics in the 20th century, the population explosion, is far from solved in the 21st.



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