



## Drumbeat: March 10, 2012

Posted by [Leanan](#) on March 10, 2012 - 9:33am

### [Nuclear Disaster in Japan Was Avoidable, Critics Contend](#)

TOKYO — A year after a huge earthquake and tsunami caused nearly catastrophic meltdowns at a nuclear plant, Japan is still grappling with a crucial question: was the accident simply the result of an unforeseeable natural disaster or something that could have been prevented?

Japan's nuclear regulators and the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power, or Tepco, have said that the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and 45-foot tsunami on March 11 that knocked out cooling systems at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant were far larger than anything that scientists had predicted. That conclusion has allowed the company to argue that it is not responsible for the triple meltdown, which forced the evacuation of about 90,000 people.

But some insiders from Japan's tightly knit nuclear industry have stepped forward to say that Tepco and regulators had for years ignored warnings of the possibility of a larger-than-expected tsunami in northeastern Japan, and thus failed to take adequate countermeasures, such as raising wave walls or placing backup generators on higher ground.

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### [Post-Fukushima U.S. Nuclear Reactor Rules Questioned Over Cost, Adequacy](#)

The first rules for U.S. reactors imposed in response to last year's nuclear disaster in Japan are fueling a debate over the adequacy and cost of the measures.

### [A Year After Fukushima Meltdown, Is Nuke Power Any Safer?](#)

Nuclear power plants are safer than they were a year ago as the nuclear industry, regulators and governments learned and acted on the lessons of the TEPCO nightmare. But safety must never be taken for granted, said Yukiya Amano, Director General of the IAEA in a press release on Friday.

### [A year after Japan's triple disaster, an uncertain recovery](#)

ISHINOMAKI, Japan — One year later, nothing is resolved.

The rubble and ocean muck of last March 11 have been scrubbed from every wall, pulled from every basement and picked from every crevasse. Now the debris is piled in terraced mountains at the edge of this town along Japan's tsunami-devastated northeastern coastline.

### [Nuclear renaissance? More like nuclear standstill](#)

A power-hungry world needs clean, reliable energy sources, but the cost of nuclear, and heightened safety concerns from Fukushima, have stalled nuclear's expansion.

### [Oil Increases for a Third Day as U.S. Payrolls Climb in February Report](#)

Oil climbed for a third day in New York after U.S. employers boosted payrolls more than forecast, bolstering optimism that the world's largest economy and fuel demand will grow.

Futures rose 0.8 percent after the Labor Department said payrolls increased by 227,000 in February. A gain of 210,000 was projected, according to the median estimate of economists surveyed by Bloomberg News. Crude also advanced as Greece pushed through the biggest sovereign restructuring in history.

### [Natural gas prices hit 10-year low](#)

NEW YORK (CNMoney) -- Natural gas future prices hit a 10-year low Thursday as slack demand and rising production continued to fuel an oversupply of the product.

Natural gas futures hit \$2.27 per million British thermal units Thursday, the lowest price since early 2002. Prices edged up slightly Friday but were still hovering around the lowest level in a decade.

### [Thailand: Ministry promises price rejig by April](#)

Mr Arak told a seminar on the ministry's 2012 policy that the most urgent issue is tackling oil prices, which affect both individuals and businesses.

He had no information on the percentage of gradual increase in fuel prices, saying only that it would not be a one-time increase.

The current subsidised price of LPG for the household sector is 18.13 baht per kilogramme against a market price of 40 baht.

### [Time, economics against Thompson gas drilling](#)

ASPEN — Time appears to be running out for a Houston-based oil and gas company that has the most aggressive drilling plan in the Thompson Divide area west of Carbondale.

### [For a Shell Executive, Much Head-Scratching](#)

Royal Dutch Shell is getting closer to winning approval to drill in Alaska's Arctic waters after several years' and more than \$4 billion worth of efforts. But for the Swiss-born executive, it is bewildering to watch the Obama administration withhold approval of the Keystone XL pipeline, which would carry crude from oil sands in Canada to refineries on the gulf coast. (Shell is a big investor in the Canadian oil sands.)

Nor does Mr. Voser understand why there is no consensus on embracing the development of natural gas from new shale fields through hydraulic fracturing (Shell is also a global leader in gas production.)

### [Natural gas revolution is a safe, abundant force for good](#)

The natural gas revolution is by far the most significant energy development in decades. Thanks to new technology and innovation, today we can affordably tap into vast fields of natural gas embedded in rocks deep in the earth, recovering a resource that just a few years ago was considered out of reach.

But as with the extraction of any natural resource, the opportunities come with challenges. Many in areas where gas is being developed worry modern production techniques will harm their environment and endanger their health. These concerns must be addressed.

### [Texas Democrats should share credit for boom in gas](#)

Some of what Democrats are doing today involves preferences for domestic oil exploration and development but also a sustainable industrial policy. This favors petroleum-related technology development and exports as well as green technologies that will increasingly substitute for fossil fuel. What we can reasonably expect from it all is a worldwide industry centered here in Greater Houston and supported by a cosmopolitan and creative culture.

### [Obama strikes back at GOP critics on gas prices](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama is hitting back at Republican criticism of his energy policies and his role in controlling gasoline prices.

Obama used his weekly radio and Internet address Saturday to underscore his administration's work to develop alternative energy sources and increase fuel efficiency.

### [Union leaders seek to mend divisions over pipeline](#)

WASHINGTON – Unions may be united in working to re-elect President Barack Obama, but their leaders also are trying to repair bitter divisions over his rejection of an oil pipeline from Canada to Texas.

Trade unions representing workers who stand to benefit from thousands of new construction jobs from the Keystone XL pipeline are furious at other unions that joined environmentalists in opposing the project.

### [Ship runs aground off Norway's southwest coast, authorities checking for oil leaks](#)

OSLO, Norway — Authorities say a container ship has run aground off Norway's southwestern coast, leaving a film of oil in the surrounding waters.

### [Bahrain protesters boost pressures on king with huge march; sporadic clashes](#)

MANAMA, Bahrain — Tens of thousands of anti-government protesters flooded a major highway in Bahrain on Friday in one of the largest opposition rallies in months against the Gulf nation's rulers. Security forces fired tear gas at smaller groups attempting to reach a heavily guarded square that was once the hub of the uprising.

### [Officials: Yemen forces target militant hideouts, killing 18](#)

(CNN) -- Yemeni air forces targeted militant hideouts in the south, killing at least 18 suspected al Qaeda insurgents, security officials said Saturday.

### [U.S. preparing to restart military aid to Yemen](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) – The Pentagon is planning to restart programs that would fund military training and equipment in Yemen, nearly a year after they were shut down because of escalating chaos in the embattled country.

### [Syria forces in new assault amid diplomacy efforts](#)

BEIRUT (AP) – Syrian troops pushed ahead with a new assault on the northern region of Idlib on Saturday, shelling one of the centers of the uprising against President Bashar Assad's rule and sending families fleeing for safety as armed rebels tried to fend off the attack. Thick black smoke billowed into the sky.

### [Syncrude takes damaged unit down for 30 days](#)

(Reuters) - A processing unit at the Syncrude Canada Ltd oil sands plant that was damaged by a minor fire last week will be down for repairs for a month, forcing the operation to push back scheduled maintenance of similar unit, the venture's largest interest owner said on Friday.

### [Peter Beutel, Energy Analyst Who Appeared on TV, Dies at 56](#)

Peter Beutel, an analyst and editor of the Daily Energy Hedger newsletter, who often appeared on CNBC, Bloomberg Television and Fox News, has died. He was 56.

### [BP accused of selling "dirty gasoline" in California](#)

Californian regulators allege BP sold gasoline between December 2008 and March 2009 that failed to comply with state limits on the amount of benzene and other potentially harmful chemicals it can contain.

### [Fracking in New York: Risk vs. Reward](#)

(CNN) -- The battle over hydraulic fracturing in the state of New York pits farmers against environmentalists, neighbor vs. neighbor, as gas companies wait to find out if they'll be able to unlock the natural gas trapped in the Marcellus Shale formation thousands of feet below the earth's surface.

As a panel appointed by New York's governor looks into whether it can be done safely in New York, landowners look with envy toward neighboring Pennsylvania, where gas companies are paying in excess of \$1,000 per acre plus royalties for the right to drill for natural gas on a property.

### [The American oil boom and its impact on Canada](#)

The surge in U.S. (and Canadian) production has held down the price of benchmark U.S. crude oil, West Texas intermediate (WTI), and forced Canadian producers to accept steeper than usual discounts on WTI prices. In response, at least one Canadian oil company temporarily shut down some production. What has been a boon for the U.S. oil-producing companies and regions is a negative for Canadian oil companies, which carry the burden of oil sands projects that have some of the highest costs per barrel in the world. This could also reduce price-based royalties so important to the budgets of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

### ['Peak oil' debate dead amid U.S. boom: BMO's Sherry Cooper](#)

An "unexpected boom" in oil supplies ends the debate on "peak oil," Bank of Montreal's chief economist believes.

Sherry Cooper took a look this week on the surge in production in the United States and Canada. And ironically, she says, many are looking at the negative hit to the economy from high prices while it's oil production that has been the biggest boon to economic growth and jobs.

"Two years ago it was believed that oil molecules were too large to extract from shale," she said. "But now, new fracking technologies and horizontal drilling has led to the biggest oil boom in many years."

### [Oil is still there but harder to extract](#)

The fact is that oil and gasoline prices may never look back, as we gradually enter a decline phase in fossil fuel availability, especially with oil. There is still a lot of oil in the earth's outer crust, but it is much harder to extract. Therefore the slow rate at which we can produce it won't match the demands of 70 million new people/year, along with the growing aspirations of billions in the less developed world. Oil is not just for transportation but also for the hundreds of products like plastics, rubber, medicine, fertilizer, pesticides, etc, made from petroleum feed stocks.

### [Last one into Bantry, please turn off the lights](#)

VISITORS TO BANTRY, in west Cork this St Patrick's weekend could be forgiven for thinking they have entered a lost realm. The Fadó festival in the town seeks to rekindle the days before the introduction of electricity, interpreting it as a kind of magical era when stories were told in the dancing shadows of candlelight. Bars will reek of burning turf and street lights will be decommissioned for novelty effect.

The town, steeped in history and folklore, is well placed to recreate the pre-electrification era, as Toby Campbell, a member of the organising committee, explains. The rush and bustle of modern living are pushing society to its limits, creating a vacuum of desire for a less demanding lifestyle, he says.

### [Doomsday business is booming](#)

Reality TV shows and emergency shelters, books and supplies of freeze-dried food. Whether or not you believe in the Mayan prophecy, Peak Oil or Global flooding, there is big money being made out of the coming collapse.

From society's wealthiest and powerful Wall Streeters to rural bug-out types, people are preparing for the worst, and sparing no expense on elaborate underground shelters, buying years' worth of non-perishable foods and stockpiling fuel and ammunition. Some have embraced the term "preppers," although precisely what they are preparing for varies, reported Fox news today



### [‘Doomsday Preppers’ promotes readiness but unrealistically](#)

Besides the issue of anticipating such dramatic events, some of the ways the individuals on the show have gone about prepping are suspect. According to those on the show, when the world ends or some catastrophic disaster occurs, everyone who has not prepared is going to turn the world into a living version of "Mad Max" or "The Road." However, I believe those who think hyperinflation is going to occur in the wake of a much greater disaster are going about their solution the wrong way.

Their solution is to buy bulk from a store and stockpile food. See the problem? People are expecting that inflation will make goods unobtainable and their solution includes getting their food from the future unreliable source. Some have circumvented this issue by starting their own farms and gardens, but the show doesn't differentiate from renewable and non-renewable.

### [New National Geographic show may not be so crazy after all](#)

Every time I think I've seen it all they come up with a new episode featuring someone who manages to outdo the guy who makes his family eat roadkill for dinner and routinely tests his children's self-defense skills by sneaking up on them at all hours of the day with a fake gun. Yeah. For reals.

### [What will life be like in 2025?](#)

Would you like a personal guru to organise your profile on social networks, a digital fireside in your community where you can tell stories, or be able to plug straight into the internet of things? These things might be reality in 2025, as we've been exploring with Sony on the Futurescapes project.

The project has allowed us to think about what might the world look like on 2025 and exploring how technology might enable sustainable lifestyles in the future. It's not about predicting so much as imagining the possibilities.

### [Nuclear power deal signed with US firm](#)

China Power Investment Corp signed an agreement on nuclear power development with Duke Energy on Friday, said the company's president, Lu Qizhou.

Lu didn't reveal details of the agreement, but said that China's cooperation with the United States in the clean energy sector is increasing.

### [Former energy chief calls for policy support on solar, wind energy](#)

BEIJING (Xinhua) -- China's former energy chief on Saturday said more policy support is needed to promote the use of solar and wind power in the Chinese market.

### [Germany to Install Record Solar Panels This Year, DIHK Says](#)

Germany will probably install a record amount of solar panels this year even as the world's biggest market for the industry plans to cut subsidies, according to the DIHK national industry and trade chambers.

### [Scoot Networks scooter sharing service launches](#)

Scoot is targeted at regular urban commuters who might otherwise attempt to dash around the city via taxi, bus or train, as well as those who might use the service to get around town only once in awhile. What's more, the scooters are controlled by your smartphone—you can reserve a car through an app on your iPhone, and then the phone in effect becomes your key, and dashboard. The scooter starts when you plug in the phone.

### [Work together to tackle food insecurity: al-Attiya](#)

Arid and semi-arid countries should work together to confront the threat of food insecurity, according to the chairman of Qatar National Food Security Programme.

### [Surviving the Season](#) (review of 'After the Snow,' by S. D. Crockett)

Fifteen-year-old Willo was born after the onset of a new ice age that has left Europe in winter's grip in S. D. Crockett's atmospheric first novel, "After the Snow," a post-apocalyptic thriller for the post-global-warming era. A strong survivor, he lives with his family of "stragglers" in the hills outside the city. He wears a coat of hand-stitched skins and a dog skull as a fierce kind of hat, and when his family is taken away by the government, he goes out in search of them, following the voice of a dog inside his head. Traveling across a harsh, cold, snow-covered terrain filled with wild packs of dogs, Willo heads into the city, a bleak realm of starvation and violence. Along the way, he falls for a girl and discovers his family secrets, as well as the deep truth of who he is and where he belongs.

### [White Trumps Black in Urban Cool Contest](#)

Temperatures on three white roofs in Queens were up to 43 degrees lower than those recorded on their black counterparts in the summertime, a study showed.

### [Kuwait joins global bid to reduce emissions](#)



Kuwait has officially joined the World Bank-led Global Gas Flaring Reduction (GGFR) partnership in an effort to further reduce emissions from the burning of natural gas associated with oil production in the Middle East.

### [EU Nations to Clash Over CO2 Goals as Poland Threatens Veto](#)

European Union nations are set for a clash over the bloc's strategy to cut greenhouse gases at a meeting today after Poland threatened to veto any declaration that may lead to stricter targets in the future.

### [A Figurative War to Replace a Real One](#)

Curbing methane and soot may be a fast, if incomplete, way to slow global warming.



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