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Departure from Oil – Energy for the Future

Oil and fuel prices have reached record highs. And with petroleum deposits dwindling worldwide, forecasts for the future are gloomy. The energy shortage is having an increasingly marked effect on the economic growth of the industrial nations of Europe and North America. But discussions on a looming energy crisis focus not just on the world's finite oil reserves but also, indeed primarily, on soaring consumption in China and the other threshold countries of Asia. Scientists are engaged in a feverish search for alternatives to oil, because the transition to a sustainable energy supply is one of the central tasks facing mankind in the 21st century.

01 The End of the Oil Age

Without oil our western standard of living could simply not be maintained. But oil is not a renewable raw material and one day reserves will be exhausted. Many experts believe that oil production has already reached its peak. Yet the world-wide demand for oil continues to rise. And at present there is no sign of an alternative with a similar energy density to oil. The battle for oil has only just begun.

02 The Oil Curse

The world's biggest oil reserves are located in politically unstable regions. The countries with substantial deposits are often young nations that are dependent on oil revenues. Many of them are neglecting to develop other sectors of the economy. What is more, the oil boom has brought widespread corruption and is widening the gulf between rich and poor. This explosive mixture often leads to political instability which, in turn, poses a threat to the industrialized nations whose prosperity depends on a secure supply of oil.

03 Energy Made in China

Over the last twenty-five years the Chinese economy has grown at a breathtaking rate. This has given rise to a tremendous demand for energy. As a result, China is striving to utilize its own energy resources. No country has greater potential for producing hydro-electric power. The Chinese are also focusing on wind power and solar energy.

04 Back to Coal

In the past numerous coal mines in Germany were shut down because they were unprofitable. But the coal industry is currently experiencing an unexpected upswing. Worldwide, more than half of all electricity is coal-generated and the attempt by many developing countries to make up ground on the industrialized nations is fuelled by coal. So is coal about to become the energy source of the future?