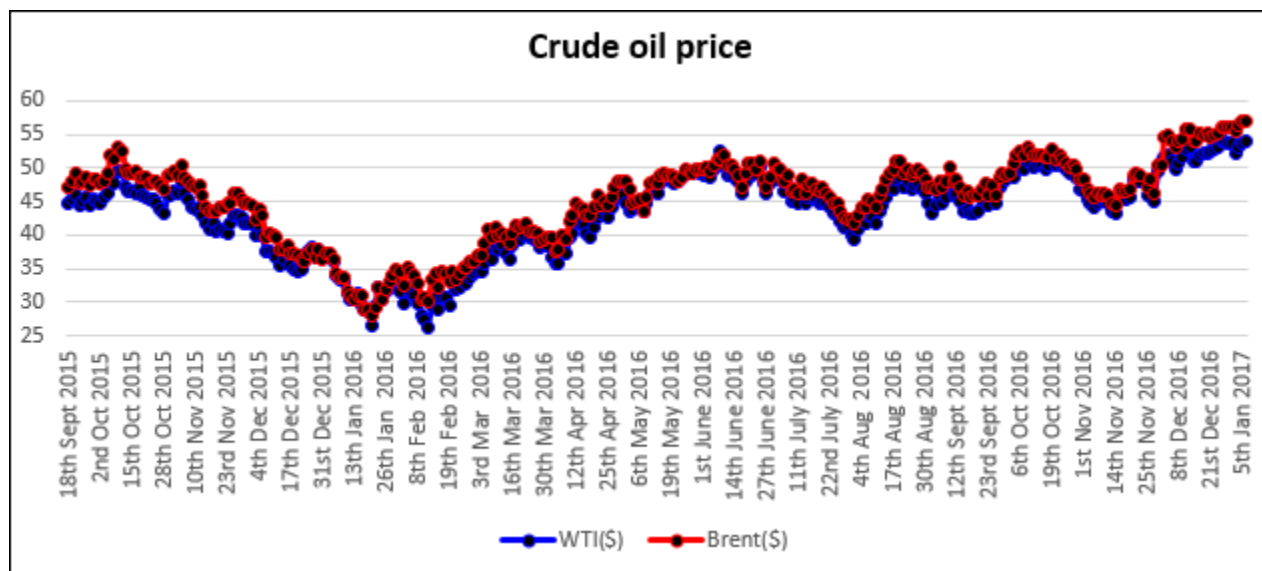


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## Calgary, Canada

Some of the news items for this week are as follows:



- The crude oil price saw some fluctuations this week, when it fell earlier in the week due to a strong US dollar, and then rose back up with the news that Saudi Arabia had said it would comply with OPEC cuts agreed to. The other pieces of news that made the price look up were that the US stockpiles fell to their lowest level in four months, and that Kuwait, Oman and Iraq had started curtailing their output. Of course, any increase in production in Libya could put pressure on the crude oil price.
- If OPEC and the other non-OPEC producers stick to their pledged cuts in the first half of 2017, the market could get stabilized. This will also have the advantage that the oil producing countries will have spare capacity that could be tapped into, if there is any political disruption somewhere. The global stockpiles of crude oil will also provide a buffer in case of any interruption in a steady supply, till such time they get drawn down. If this happens, we could see the crude oil price gradually look up in 2017, and so can expect a less quiet year. Having said that, we know that political risk is rampant in many countries. The domestic turmoil in Libya and Nigeria, the bad shape of the economy in Venezuela, the tense relations between the Gulf Arab States and Iran are some obvious ones. Other risk factors could be some other calamities such as the wild fires that happened this year, and of course the expected assumption of office by the US President-elect, Donald Trump.
- After a fire broke out, Royal Dutch Shell closed down the Trans Niger oil pipeline, which transports 180,000 b/d to an export terminal in Niger Delta. This has happened when Nigeria is struggling to restore its capacity after militant attacks had been happening over the last year.

So much for the industry news this week.

*For the lighter side this week*

Have you ever wondered how animals such as lions, kill and eat raw meat, vultures also feed on raw meat, yet when it comes to humans, we read reports that half-cooked meat increases the risk of getting food-borne diseases such as E-Coli, Salmonella, Listeria, and others?

There are many videos available on you-tube showing lions killing other animals such as gazelle or deer, and then collectively they feed on their kill. Similarly, as I mentioned in the question above, vultures are able to feed on fresh or old rotting meat, and yet they seem okay with that. The one reason that is put forward for these instances is that the lions immediately feed on their kill. Besides, their digestive system is such that the hazardous materials get sterilized in there.

We humans usually consume meat that has been stored for long periods and made available in stores. And so cooking meat items is a safer way to avoid illness. Besides, eating cooked food produces more calories than eating the same raw food. An example may be in order here. Starches found in wheat, barley, potatoes consist of sugar molecules that are tightly bound, but on cooking are released and exposed to enzymes in our digestive system and hence yield more energy. The same argument holds for tough protein strands found in meat, which on cooking provides more calories to our body.

Another important aspect has to do with meat consumption and cancer risk. There was a WHO report I read sometime back that linked 30% of all cancers in Western countries and 20% in developing countries with dietary factors. Vegetarians are 40% less likely to develop cancer. Another Harvard study discussed about daily meat eaters being at three times the risk of colon cancer than those that rarely eat meat. Yet another 2007 study by American Institute of Cancer Research published a study that red meat consumption is responsible for increased risk of cancers of lung, pancreas, stomach, colorectal and prostate. Non-vegetarians can argue that such studies are based on a small sampling of patients and cannot convincingly draw conclusions. But more and more evidence is emerging on the lines of the studies mentioned. One main reason put forward is that meat has very little fiber, antioxidants, phytochemicals and other helpful nutrients. Rather it has higher concentrations of saturated fat carcinogenic compounds which could easily increase the risk of any type of cancer.

It is good to be aware of such things so that any consumption of these foods can be done in moderation, if not completely cut off from one's diet.

I hope you will find this interesting.

*Did you know?*

In the year 1911, an orphanage in Paris held a raffle of live babies. Shocked?

Yes, that is correct!

The management of the orphanage in reference took the consent of the authorities, to find homes for the orphan babies and also to raise money. Interestingly, the baby raffle was a resounding success, in that not only the babies found homes to live in, the money raised was divided amongst several charitable institutions.

Today this sounds like an atrocious idea, and despite its success, perhaps the raffle was not held again. But considering the fate of the orphans who at the time could not get into an orphanage, had to live on the streets, some forced into child labour, some working with dangerous equipment, and some led into a life of crime, the idea of finding suitable homes, where the couples were willing to become foster parents, doesn't seem so bizarre.

This story was published in the January 1912 issue of *Popular Mechanics*, a popular magazine of the time. So much for this week! Till the next post, stay safe and happy! 😊