Aramco Revives Talks on Multi-Billion Dollar Refinery in China

Saudi Arabia’s state oil company Aramco has revived discussions to build a multi-billion dollar refining and petrochemicals complex in China, according to several people with knowledge of the matter.
Aramco is holding preliminary negotiations about a facility in the Northeastern province of Liaoning with partners including Norinco, a state-owned defense contractor, said the people.

Talks over what was meant to be a $10 billion venture were suspended in 2020 as oil crashed at the start of the pandemic. Now, with crude approaching $100 a barrel, Aramco’s finances have been transformed, freeing up money for investment in its biggest export market.

China and Saudi Arabia’s ties have strengthened as Beijing’s need for oil has grown along with its economy. The kingdom was the biggest supplier of crude to China last year, according to

data compiled by Bloomberg.
As part of the Chinese refinery plan, Aramco is negotiating terms that could include its trading unit providing crude to the venture, said two of the people. Aramco Trading Co. purchases and sells oil from Saudi Arabia and other countries.
An agreement is not imminent and it’s still unclear how much of the original plan still stands, said the people.
Aramco didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment. Calls to a Norinco spokesman’s office after business hours weren’t answered. An email to a spokesman and the general address of the company wasn’t immediately answered.

Downstream Expansion

Aramco and Norinco signed a framework agreement in 2017 to construct a refinery capable of handling 300,000 barrel per day of crude. They were also meant to build a 1.5-million-ton-per-year ethylene plant.

Saudi Aramco cut spending and shelved several projects in 2020 to protect its $75 billion annual dividend, the world’s biggest. Its cashflow has jumped this year and rose above its quarterly dividend in the second and third quarters.

The company’s downstream business, which includes chemicals subsidiary Sabic, swung to a profit as margins for refined fuel climbed. The unit — which includes refineries, retail operations, trading and Sabic — made a $4 billion profit before interest and tax in the third quarter.

Aramco aims to roughly double its global refining network to handle as much as 10 million barrels a day by 2030. It was mulling a $15 billion investment in Reliance Industries Ltd.’s oil-to-chemicals unit in India, but the plan was scrapped late last year.

ExxonMobil posts $23bn in 2021 profi ts on higher oil prices

ExxonMobil reported a profitable fourth-quarter Tuesday to conclude a strong comeback year in 2021 on higher oil prices amid recovering energy demand.

The oil giant reported annual profits of $23 billion last year compared with a loss of $22.4 billion in 2020 when demand was dented by the Covid-19 lockdowns. High oil prices helped boost results again during the quarter, although increased costs cut into gains in some operations.

“Our effective pandemic response, focused investments during the down-cycle, and structural cost savings positioned us to realize the full benefits of the market recovery in 2021," said Chief Executive Darren Woods.

In the fourth quarter, ExxonMobil's upstream business benefited from higher prices in oil and natural gas, which surged 63 percent compared with the third quarter.

The company also benefited from a profitable run in its downstream business in a reversal from last year's fourth quarter, as well as increased earnings in chemicals.

However, ExxonMobil said profits in its European refining operations were limited somewhat by higher energy prices. The company also flagged higher feed and energy costs as a drag in its chemical business.

On Monday, ExxonMobil announced it was combining its chemical and downstream businesses as it enacts $6 billion in cost savings through 2023. The company is also shifting its corporate headquarter to Houston from Irving, Texas near Dallas.

Higher oil prices set to lead to higher twin deficits, inflation in most Fitch-rated energy importers in Mena

Higher oil prices are set to lead to higher twin deficits and inflation in most Fitch-rated energy importers in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena), the agency has said in a new report. Most of these Mena countries with the exception of GCC sovereigns are net importers of hydrocarbons. “We assume oil prices will moderate to average USD70 a barrel in 2022 (similar to 2021) and fall further in 2023- 2024.However, price risks are to the upside,” Fitch Ratings said. In all but one Mena oil importers, regulated electricity prices are below the cost recovery level. Support to electricity sectors is a significant contributor to fiscal deficits and/or the build-up of indebtedness in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, it said. Electricity prices for consumers have been flat through 2020-2021 in Morocco and Tunisia but have risen in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. In Egypt, this is part of a programme of tariff hikes. Countries are generally seeking to enact reforms over the medium term that will raise tariffs (at least for some consumers) while providing targeted assistance. Petroleum subsidies have largely been removed across the region, and prices adjust to oil market fluctuations, although subject to decisions by a pricing committee in most countries and a small monthly adjustment cap in Tunisia. Higher global oil prices have trickled through to transportation CPI inflation across the region. According to Fitch Ratings, higher energy prices will widen current account deficits (CADs) of net energy importers, particularly Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan and Morocco. In Tunisia, this will put pressure on (currently adequate) foreignexchange reserves, amid lack of access to external funding. In Lebanon, import volumes will be constrained by dwindling reserves, absence of external funding and a collapsing economy. Rising prices of hydrocarbon feedstock could eventually require changes in tariffs or higher fiscal outlays to support electricity sectors, although electricity companies can absorb higher losses in the short term. Gas pricing is linked to oil prices, but long-term supply agreements cushion the impact of hydrocarbon price swings (in Jordan and Tunisia), as does domestic hydrocarbon production (in Egypt, Israel and Tunisia) and electricity generation from renewables (most importantly in Morocco), Fitch said.

Total, Eni to invest in Libya’s energy sector

France’s TotalEnergies and Italy’s Eni said they were ready to invest billions of dollars in Libya as the OPEC nation emerges from a decade of conflict and civil war. France’s TotalEnergies and Italy’s Eni said they were ready to invest billions of dollars in Libya as the OPEC nation emerges from a decade of conflict and civil war. “I want to contribute to Libya’s comeback,” TotalEnergies’ Chief Executive Officer Patrick Pouyanne said on Monday at an energy conference in the capital, Tripoli.

“Some may see more boldness than wisdom in TotalEnergies’ decision to partner with Libya. I don’t. Where they see risks, I see the opportunities.” The Paris-based firm will put $2 billion into Libya’s Waha oil project, which will boost production by around 100,000 barrels a day, he said. It will also work to raise output at the Mabruk field and help build 500 megawatts of solar power to feed the local grid. Libya will be a vital source of supply for global petroleum markets over the next decade, Pouyanne said. The nation contains Africa’s biggest oil reserves but has been mired in fighting for much of the period since 2011, when leader Moammar Qaddafi was toppled in an uprising.

Warring sides struck a truce in mid-2020, leading to more stability and enabling crude output to rise from barely anything to around 1.1 million barrels a day. The government has said it needs plenty of foreign investment to sustain that level of output, let alone reach its target of between 2 and 2.5 million barrels per day within six years. Elections Loom An interim government led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah is meant to govern the country until shortly after presidential elections scheduled for Dec. 24. Dbeibah said this week that he will run for the presidency, joining a field that includes Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, a son of the former dictator, and eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar. The two-day conference is the first prominent energy forum in Libya for over 10 years. Pouyanne and Eni’s chief operating officer, Alessandro Puliti, were the highest-profile foreign executives to attend on the first day. Eni will push ahead with oil, natural-gas and solar projects, according to Puliti. “Libya has significant remaining oil and gas potential,” he said. “Eni is ready to support that development.” The Italian company was one of the first firms to explore in Libya and struck oil there in the late 1950s. It currently pumps about 400,000 barrels a day of oil and gas, making it the biggest foreign energy company in the country, Puliti said.

بارودي: قرار بايدن لخفض أسعار النفط العالمية… ودول أخرى ستلجأ إلى احتياطها

المركزية- لفت الخبير الاقتصادي في شؤون الطاقه رودي بارودي إلى أن "القرار الذي اتخذه الرئيس الأميركي جو بايدن باستخدام جزء من احتياطي النفط الأميركي، "يهدف إلى خفض التضخم والمحافظة على الاسعار العالمية بشكل اقتصادي أكثر استدامة".

وأكد بارودي في مقابلة مع "الجزيرة" – إنكليزي، "استخدام ما يعدل 7% فقط من أصل مجموع الاحتياطي الأميركي الذي يعادل ٧١٤ مليون برميل". وكشف أن "واشنطن اتخذت هذا القرار للحدّ من تحكم دول "أوبك بلس" وروسيا بسعر النفط العالمي".

كذلك أكد أن "الصين، الهند، كوريا الجنوبية وبريطانيا سيبدأون باستخدام احتياطي النفط المتوفر لديهم، وذلك لدعم استقرار سوق النفط"، مشدداً على أن "الرئيس الأميركي لديه أسلحة وطرق اقتصادية أخرى ومنها الطلب من منتِجي الغاز الصخري في الولايات المتحدة زيادة الإنتاج، والذي من الممكن أن يؤثر بشكل كبير على الأسعار العالمية".

Maritime borders deal between Greece, Italy comes into effect

ANKARA

A deal drawing maritime borders between Greece and Italy came into effect on Monday, said Italian diplomatic sources.

The two countries exchanged the tools of ratification of the deal during an official visit by Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias to Rome, said Italy's Foreign Ministry in a statement.

During the meeting with Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, cooperation in the fields of energy and economy, and regional developments, particularly concerning Libya and the Eastern Mediterranean, were also addressed, the statement added.

According to Italian official news agency ANSA, Dendias accused Turkey of "violations in the Eastern Mediterranean" and threatening Greece.

Turkey, while seeking to defend its fair share of maritime territory in the Eastern Mediterranean, has decried recent provocative Greek moves such as the militarization of Aegean islands that are demilitarized by a treaty, navigational alerts (Navtex) that violate longstanding pacts, and illegal encroachment on Turkey’s continental shelf.

Turkey, which has the longest continental coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean, has rejected the maritime boundary claims of Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration, stressing that these excessive claims violate the sovereign rights of both Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots.

Turkish leaders have repeatedly stressed that Ankara is in favor of resolving all outstanding problems in the region –- including maritime disputes -– through international law, good neighborly relations, dialogue, and negotiations.

Also, the implementation of the EU’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan for handling the economic effects of the pandemic, cooperation against irregular migration, and EU’s enlargement to the Western Balkans were discussed between the two ministers.

Dendias, on Tuesday, was received by the Vatican’s Secretary of State Pietro Paroli.

In the meeting, bilateral and regional developments, ahead of Pope Francis’ scheduled visit to Greece on Dec.4-6, were discussed, said the Greek Foreign Ministry.

Greece, a predominantly Orthodox country, has a minority of over 50,000 Catholics, excluding expatriates and migrants, who are mostly concentrated in islands in the Aegean and Ionian Sea.

OPEC+ Softens View of Market Tightness

OPEC+ technical experts downgraded their expectations for how tight global oil markets will be this quarter, a week before ministers meet to decide production policy.

The global oil-supply deficit will be just 300,000 barrels a day on average in the fourth quarter, the coalition's Joint Technical Committee concluded on Thursday, according to delegates. That's much smaller than the 1.1 million barrel daily shortfall shown in figures initially presented to the panel, which revised its view using fresher data on demand, delegates said.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its partners gather on Nov. 4 to review their plans to gradually restore some more of the production they halted during the pandemic. The revision to the supply and demand figures could give support to the cautious position espoused by cartel-leader Saudi Arabia, which has resisted calls to increase output more quickly.

While crude’s rally to a seven-year high has spurred the White House to seek additional supplies, the kingdom has warned that demand remains vulnerable to ongoing outbreaks of the coronavirus. Brent futures neared $87 a barrel on Monday, but have since eased by a few dollars.

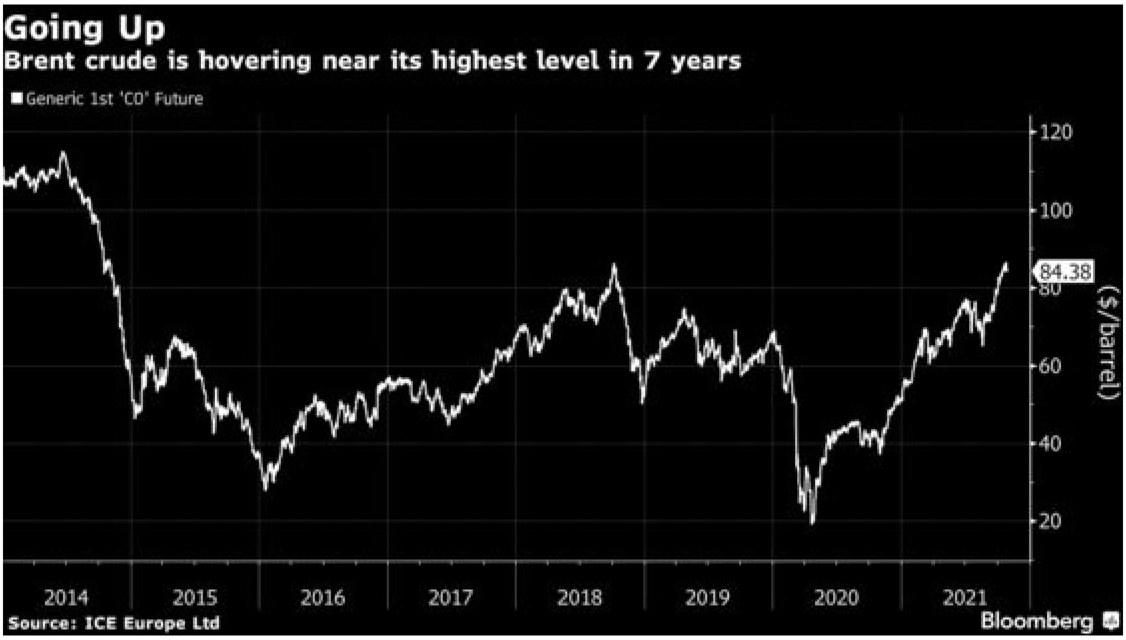
“We’re not out of the doldrums of Covid,” Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said in a Bloomberg television interview on Oct. 24. “One needs to be careful also of taking things for granted when the crisis has been somewhat contained, but is not necessarily over.”

The 23-nation OPEC+ alliance, jointly led by the Saudis and Russia, is reviving shuttered supplies in modest increments of 400,000 barrels a day each month. It’s expected to ratify another such hike when ministers convene on-line next week.

The JTC also adopted a more bearish outlook for 2022, because of stronger-than-expected growth in non-OPEC supply. There will be an average surplus of 1.6 million barrels a day next year, the committee concluded, compared with preliminary estimates of 1.3 million a day.

As Oil Races Toward $100,

Consumers Tell OPEC+ Enough Is Enough



For the past year, oil consuming countries have become increasingly anxious at crude's resurgence: first to $50 a barrel, then $75 and now to more than $85. And when Vladimir Putin, one of the leaders of the OPEC+ cartel, warned that $100 a barrel was a distinct possibility, the alarm bells really started ringing.

Now, as quickening inflation pushes some central banks towards earlier-than-expected rate of interest hikes, the U.S. India, Japan and different consuming international locations are placing the strongest diplomatic strain on the cartel in years.

Behind closed doorways, an intense marketing campaign is being waged to influence OPEC+ to hurry up its output will increase, in line with a number of diplomats and business insiders concerned within the contacts. The cartel, which meets just about on Nov. 4 to assessment coverage, is at the moment boosting output at a price of 400,000 barrels a day every month.

The personal efforts come on prime of current public appeals. The Biden administration is more and more alarmed by rising gasoline costs which have reached a 7-year excessive, and has been calling on OPEC+ for weeks to pump extra oil. Japan, the world's fourth-largest oil client, took the uncommon step of including its voice to these calls in late October — a primary for Tokyo since 2008. India, the third-largest client, has additionally requested for extra crude. China has been silent in public, however is equally vocal in personal, diplomats stated.

"We found ourselves in an energy crisis," Amos Hochstein, the highest U.S. power diplomat, stated this week, reflecting a view broadly held view by large oil consuming nations. "Producers should ensure that oil markets and gas markets are balanced."

U.S., Japanese and Indian officers have spoken privately amongst themselves and likewise reached out to different large customers and oil-producing international locations. The calls began round three weeks in the past, however have intensified in current days after costs handed $85 a barrel.

The Japanese "government is currently asking oil-producing countries to increase production in the Middle East," in line with Tsutomu Sugimori, chairman of the Petroleum Association of Japan. "As the petroleum industry, we hope oil-producing countries, including OPEC, will take appropriate steps so as not to hinder a full-fledged recovery of the world's economy."

So far, Saudi Arabia and others have refused to go faster, arguing the month-to-month 400,000 barrel-a-day additions are sufficient to fulfill the urge for food for oil in a world financial system nonetheless nursing the injuries of the pandemic.

"We are not yet out of the woods," Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman stated on Bloomberg Television final week. "We need to be careful. The crisis is contained but is not necessarily over."

The prince’s feedback have been echoed in personal and public by others inside the OPEC+, an alliance of nations accounting for almost two-thirds of the world’s oil provide. Azerbaijan Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov stated for instance there wasn’t a must rush quicker output will increase. “We have agreed on a very wise and smart program for months to come,” he stated.

Saudi Arabia will most likely get its approach if it pushes to stay with a 400,000 barrel-a-day hike subsequent. For many OPEC+ officers they’re being made a scapegoat for a disaster they didn’t create. The downside, they argue, is just not oil however hovering pure gasoline and coal costs, which in flip have boosted electrical energy costs. Even if the cartel was to go quicker, that wouldn’t resolve these shortages, they stated.

Some within the group who can be open to doing extra, nevertheless, if Saudi Arabia took the lead, a number of OPEC+ delegates stated, asking to not be named earlier than the assembly takes place.

Shifting Mood

For most of this 12 months oil-consuming nations accepted OPEC+ was doing sufficient. But after oil costs rose from $70 to greater than $85 a barrel and crude inventories in industrialized international locations declined sharply over the past couple of months, the temper has shifted. Now officers from consuming international locations consider the oil market is under-supplied.

Many consuming international locations have been reluctant to name extra overtly for additional oil manufacturing simply earlier than a serious UN local weather change summit in Glasgow, Scotland, referred to as COP26. But even that notion downside is beginning to fade. Jake Sullivan, the U.S. mational safety advisor, defined that Washington might combat in opposition to local weather change and guarantee there's sufficient power to gasoline financial progress within the quick future.

"Our view is that the global recovery should not be imperiled by a mismatch between supply and demand," Sullivan stated on board Air Force One whereas en path to Rome for this week's Group of 20 summit. "And action needs to be taken," he stated, revealing that American diplomats have been in contact with "the largest consuming countries in the world to include China as well as India, Japan, Korea, the Europeans, and others."

President Joe Biden "will have those conversations at the G-20," Sullivan stated. "We will see what comes as a result of those conversations."

Saudi energy minister dismisses calls for extra OPEC+ barrels

MOSCOW, Oct 14 (Reuters) – OPEC leader Saudi Arabia dismissed calls for speedier oil output increases on Thursday, saying its efforts with allies were enough and protecting the oil market from the wild price swings seen in natural gas and coal markets.

“What we see in the oil market today is an incremental (price) increase of 29%, vis-à-vis 500% increases in (natural) gas prices, 300% increases in coal prices, 200% increases in NGLs (natural gas liquids) …,” Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman told a forum in Moscow on Thursday.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies led by Russia, collectively known as OPEC+, have done a “remarkable” job acting as “so-called regulator of the oil market,” he said.

“Gas markets, coal markets, other sources of energy need a regulator. This situation is telling us that people need to copy and paste what OPEC+ has done and what it has achieved.”

Asked about calls by major consumers like the United States for OPEC+ to increase production further to cool off rising oil prices, Prince Abdulaziz said: “I keep telling people we are increasing production.”

He said OPEC+ would be adding 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) in November, and then again in the following months.

At its meeting earlier this month, OPEC+ stuck to its agreement of increasing production by 400,000 bpd a month as it unwinds production cuts.

“We want to make sure that we reduce those excess capacities that we have developed as a result of COVID,” he said, adding that OPEC+ wanted to do it “in a gradual, phased-in approach”.

Prince Abdulaziz said that while OECD oil inventories were on track to normalise at the end of this year, 2022 was looking “a bit of a challenging year”.

OPEC+ figures show the oil market is set for a surplus of about 1.4 million bpd next year.

Additional reporting by Katya Golubkova and Olesya Astakhova in Moscow, and Ahmad Ghaddar in London Editing by Jason Neely and Mark Potter
Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.

China’s Energy Crisis Is Hitting Everything From iPhones to Milk

NEW DELHI: The hit from China’s energy crunch is starting to ripple throughout the globe, hurting everyone from Toyota Motor Corp to Australian sheep farmers and makers of cardboard boxes.

Not only is the extreme electricity shortage in the world’s largest exporter set to hurt its own growth, the knock-on impact to supply chains could crimp a global economy struggling to emerge from the pandemic.

The timing couldn’t be worse, with the shipping industry already facing congested supply lines that are delaying deliveries of clothes and toys for the year-end holidays. It also comes just as China starts its harvest season, raising concerns over sharply higher grocery bills.

China’s export growth unexpectedly surged in August, with port disruptions due to fresh outbreaks of the delta virus having limited impact on trade.

“If the electricity shortages and production cuts continue, they could become yet another factor causing global supplyside problems, especially if they start to affect the production of export products," said Louis Kuijs, senior Asia economist at Oxford Economics.

Slower growth

Economists have already warned of slower growth in China. At Citigroup, a vulnerability index indicates that exporters of manufactured goods and commodities are particularly at risk to a weakening Chinese economy.

Neighbors like Taiwan and Korea are sensitive, as are metal exporters such as Australia and Chile, and key trading partners such as Germany are also somewhat exposed.

As for consumers, the question is whether manufacturers will be able to absorb higher costs or will pass them along.

"This is looking like another stagflationary shock for manufacturing, not just for China but for the world," said Craig Botham, chief China economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. "The price increases by now are pretty broad-based — a consequence of China's deep involvement in global supply chains."

UN index of global food costs is at the highest in a decade

Beijing has been scouring for power supplies as it tries to stabilize the situation. The impact on the global economy will depend on how quickly those efforts bear fruit.

Many Chinese factories reduced production for this week's "Golden Week" holiday, and economists are closely watching whether power shortages will return as they ramp up again.

Already, though, some industries are under pressure, and the damage they're seeing could quickly fan out to other sectors.

Paper

Consider paper. Production of cardboard boxes and packing materials was already strained by skyrocketing demand during the pandemic.

Now, temporary shutdowns in China have hit output even harder, leading to a possible 10% to 15% reduction in supply for September and October, according to Rabobank. That will add further complications to businesses already suffering from the global paper shortage.

Food

The food supply chain is also at risk as the energy crisis makes harvest season more challenging for the world's biggest agricultural producer.

Global food prices have already jumped to a decade high, and worries are mounting that the situation will worsen as China struggles to handle crops from corn to soy to peanuts and cotton.

In recent weeks, several plants were forced to shut or reduce output to conserve electricity, such as soybean processors that crush beans to produce meal for animal feed and oil for cooking.

Prices for fertilizer, one of the most important elements of agriculture, are skyrocketing, slamming farmers already buckling under the strain of rising costs.

The processing industry is set to be more severely affected than staples such as grains and meat, Rabobank analysts wrote in a report this week. In the dairy sector, power cuts could disrupt the operation of milking machines, while pork suppliers will face pressure from tighter supply of cold storage.

Wool

Outside of China, Australian sheep farmers are bracing for weaker demand just as they seek to sell their wool at auctions. The industry saw Chinese mills reduce production by up to 40% due to power cuts last week, Australian Broadcasting Corp reported.

Tech

The tech world could also see a dramatic hit, given that China is the world's biggest production base for gadgets from iPhones to gaming consoles, and a major center for the packaging of semiconductors used in autos and appliances.

Several companies have already experienced downtime at their Chinese facilities to comply with local restrictions. Pegatron Corp, a key partner for Apple, said last month it began to adopt energy-saving measures, while ASE Technology Holding Co, the world's biggest chip packager, halted production for

several days.
The overall impact on the tech sector has so far been limited because of customary shutdowns around the week-long holiday. Should the energy crunch worsen, it could hit production ahead of the crucial year-end shopping season.
Industry giants including Dell Technologies Inc and Sony Group Corp can ill afford another supply shock after pandemic-induced turmoil fomented a global chip shortage that will extend well into 2022 and beyond.
Automakers
Any further deterioration of the semiconductor market would also add headaches for automakers, who have already seen production crunched by the chip shortage.
The industry, which is high on the list of protected sectors in times like these, has thus far largely been spared from the effects of the power crisis.
Still, there have been some isolated instances. Toyota, which produces more than 1 million vehicles a year in China at plants centered around Tianjin and Guangzhou, has said some of its operations have been impacted by the power shortages.