China's Vehicle Sales Bounced Back in March

CFOTO/NURPHOTO/ZUMA PRESS

China's vehicle sales rose in March, bouncing back from a weaker showing the previous month and registering a gradual pace of growth for the first quarter of the year, signaling that demand may be turning a corner.

Retail sales of passenger cars in China rose 6% from a year earlier to 1.687 million units, the China Passenger Car Association said Tuesday. Sales surged 53% compared with last month, as consumer demand recovered after the Lunar New Year in February, the association said.

BYD kept its title as the top seller of electric vehicles in March, selling 301,631 units, with Tesla in second place. The Chinese EV giant overtook the U.S. company as the world's top seller of EVs in the final quarter of 2023.

Tuesday's data showed that Tesla delivered 89,064 cars made at its Shanghai plant in March, recovering from February when it posted its lowest monthly figure since late 2022.

Countrywide, retail sales of new-energy cars, which include EVs and plug-in hybrids, rose 29.5% to 709,000 units.

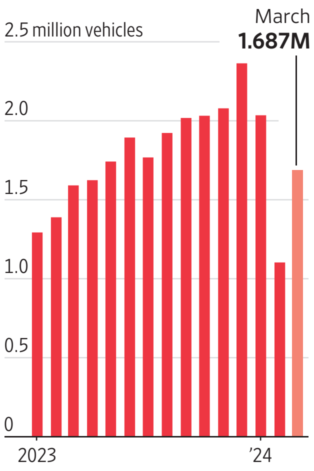
Chinese exports of passenger cars hit a record high, jumping 39% to 406,000 units in March. Exports of new-energy vehicles rose 71% during the month, with Tesla exporting 26,666 cars made in China.

Consumers have been holding back from buying cars as they look at how the price war among automakers unfolds, and await more details on a government trade-in program for big-ticket items and how it applies to cars, the car association said.

Consumer sentiment toward cars is set to brighten moving forward, the association said. Expected launches from more automakers in April and Beijing's measures to boost consumption could also help buoy demand, it added.

—*Jiahui Huang*

Retail sales of passenger cars in China



Source: China Passenger Car Association

BP Expects Boost In Quarterly Profit On Higher Output

By Christian Moess Laursen

BP expects a boost to first-quarter profit from higher oil, gas and low-carbon energy production, while lower natural-gas prices will temper gains.

The British energy major on Tuesday backed its guidance of higher upstream production—the extraction of raw crude oil and natural gas—in the first quarter, with higher output in oil production and operations and slightly higher production of gas and low-carbon energy compared with the previous quarter.

In the fourth quarter, BP's oil production was 1.42 million of oil-equivalent barrels a day, while it produced 899,000 BOE a day of gas and low-carbon energy.

The update follows that of BP's closest rival **Shell**, which on Friday lifted its guidance for first-quarter production of integrated gas and liquefied natural gas.

The London-based oil-and-gas companies are the first European majors to provide updates on first-quarter production and earnings amid concerns that natural-gas businesses could face pressure after prices dropped year over year in 2023, following a spike in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine.

BP said lower natural-gas prices will likely hit both its gas and low-carbon energy segment as well as its oil production and operations segment this quarter.

It said Brent averaged $83.16 a barrel in the quarter compared with $84.34 in the preceding quarter, while gas prices averaged $2.25 per million British thermal units versus $2.88.

Additionally, profit from its gas and low-carbon energy segment is expected to take a hit of $400 million to $600 million, mainly due to lower natural-gas prices and the devaluation of the Egyptian pound. Price lags on production in the Gulf of Mexico and the United Arab Emirates are expected to drive a dent of $300 million to $600 million to profit from oil production and operations.

However, its gas marketing and trading result is expected to be strong, the company added.

In the first quarter of 2023, BP logged gas and low-carbon energy production of 969,000 BOE a day and oil production of 1.36 million BOE a day.

Chevron Withdraws From Natural-Gas Project in Myanmar

By Kimberley Kao And Ben Otto

Chevron has completed its exit from Myanmar, giving up its stake in the country's largest natural gas project two years after saying it would depart the troubled Southeast Asian nation in the wake of a military coup.

A spokesperson for the U.S. energy giant confirmed Tuesday that two of its units had formally withdrawn Chevron's stakes in the offshore Yadana natural gas project and an associated pipeline company.

Chevron redistributed its 41% stake in Yadana to Thailand's state-owned energy group **PTT Exploration & Production** and Myanmar's state-owned **Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise**, the project's two remaining shareholders.

"The withdrawal gives effect to our intention to exit Myanmar in a controlled and orderly manner, following the February 2021 coup, and ongoing humanitarian crisis," the Chevron spokesperson said.

Chevron in 2022 announced its plan to exit Myanmar, later agreeing to sell its assets in the country to Canadian oil firm MTI Energy.

It declined to comment Tuesday on why it had chosen to redistribute the stake instead, but said it had carried out its exit "in a responsible, orderly and safe manner, in accordance with international law and trade sanctions."

Chevron won't book a financial gain from the redistribution, the spokesperson confirmed. PTTEP said separately in a filing to the Thai stock exchange that Chevron's withdrawal was effective April 1, and that the Thai company's stake in Yadana had risen to almost 63%. PTTEP has been the project's operator since 2022, when French oil-and-gas group **TotalEnergies** withdrew both as partner and operator as part of its own exit from Myanmar.

Yadana is Myanmar's largest natural-gas project, and one of the biggest in Southeast Asia. It produced about half of all gas consumed in Myanmar in 2021, according to PTTEP.

Chevron's withdrawal marks the end of a decadeslong foray into Myanmar, a country of about 55 million people whose political conflicts have frustrated attempts to shake off its relative isolation and draw more foreign investment to catch up to more developed neighbors.