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Top News - Oil

OPEC boosts long-term oil demand outlook, driven by developing world growth

OPEC raised its forecasts for world oil demand for the medium and long term in an annual outlook, citing growth led by India, Africa and the Middle East and a slower shift to electric vehicles and cleaner fuels.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, in its 2024 World Oil Outlook published on Tuesday, sees demand growing for a longer period than other forecasters like BP and the International Energy Agency, which expect oil use to peak this decade.

"Future energy demand is found in the developing world due to increasing populations, middle class and urbanization," said OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al Ghais during the report's launch in Brazil, a country with which the group is seeking to form closer ties.

Al Ghais' speech in Rio de Janeiro was briefly disturbed by a protester from Greenpeace.

A longer period of rising consumption would be a boost for OPEC, whose 12 members depend on oil income. In support of its view, OPEC said it expected more push back on "ambitious" clean energy targets, and cited plans by several global carmakers to scale down electrification goals.

"There is no peak oil demand on the horizon," Al Ghais wrote in the foreword to the report.

"Over the past year, there has been further recognition that the world can only phase in new energy sources at scale when they are genuinely ready."

OPEC expects world oil demand to reach 118.9 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2045, around 2.9 million bpd higher than expected in last year's report. The report rolled out its timeline to 2050 and expects demand to hit 120.1 million bpd by then.

That is far above other 2050 forecasts from the industry. BP projects oil use will peak in 2025 and decline to 75 million bpd in 2050. Exxon Mobil expects oil demand to stay above 100 million bpd through 2050, similar to today's level.

OPEC has been calling for more oil industry investment and said the sector needs $17.4 trillion to be spent to 2050, compared with $14 trillion needed by 2045 estimated last year.

"All policymakers and stakeholders need to work together to ensure a long-term investment-friendly climate," Al Ghais wrote.

HIGHER 2029 FORECAST THAN IEA

OPEC also raised its medium term demand forecasts, citing a stronger economic backdrop than last year as inflation pressure wanes and central banks start to lower interest rates.

World demand in 2028 will reach 111 million bpd, OPEC said, and 112.3 million bpd in 2029. The 2028 figure is up 800,000 bpd from last year's prediction.

OPEC's 2029 forecast is more than 6 million bpd higher than that of the IEA, which said in June demand will plateau in 2029 at 105.6 million bpd. The gap is larger than the combined output of OPEC members Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

In 2020, OPEC made a shift when the pandemic hit oil demand, saying consumption would plateau in the late 2030s. It has begun raising forecasts again as oil use has recovered.

By 2050, there will be 2.9 billion vehicles on the road, up 1.2 billion from 2023, OPEC forecast. Despite electric vehicle growth, vehicles powered by a combustion engine will account for more than 70% of the global fleet in 2050, the report said.

"Electric vehicles are poised for a larger market share, but obstacles remain, such as electricity grids, battery manufacturing capacity and access to critical minerals," it said.

OPEC and its allies, known as OPEC+, are cutting supply to support the market. The report sees OPEC+'s share of the oil market rising to 52% in 2050 from 49% in 2023 as U.S. output peaks in 2030 and non-OPEC+ output does so in the early 2030s.

Storm Helene's eastward tack eases pressure on offshore US oil

Tropical Storm Helene was expected to turn eastward on its track through the Caribbean and into the Gulf of Mexico, increasing the threat of high winds and heavy rains to Cuba and Florida but lessened the risk to U.S. offshore oil production, forecasters said on Tuesday.

The storm was moving through the Caribbean and expected to enter the Gulf of Mexico and become a hurricane by Wednesday, potentially rising to a major hurricane with 115 mph (184 kph) winds on Thursday, the National Hurricane Center said. Its current track takes it along the west coast of Florida toward a landfall on the state's panhandle later this week. That path lessens the risk to oil producing regions in the central Gulf of Mexico, meteorologists said. The region accounts for 15% of U.S. oil and 2% of natural gas production.

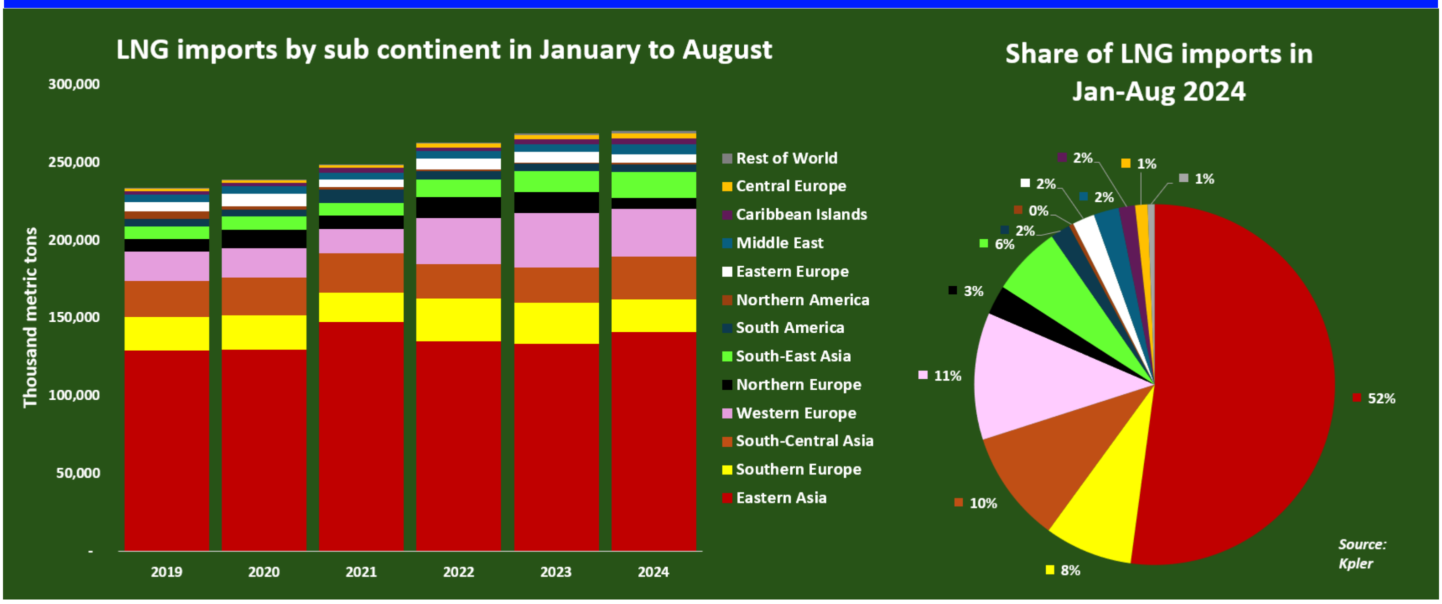
Offshore producers have shut-in 16% of U.S. Gulf of Mexico oil and 11% of natural gas output. The numbers

represent some 284,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude and 208 million cubic feet per day of gas. Four platforms were reported as evacuated and two rigs were moved out of the storm's path, the offshore regulator said on Tuesday.
The U.S. Coast Guard on Tuesday began imposing restrictions for vessel navigation at portions of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and some ports, including Mobile in Alabama, and Panama City, Pensacola and St. Joe in Florida, according to shipping notices.
The ports of Gulfport, Pascagoula and Tombigbee remained open to vessel navigation on Tuesday, according to the Coast Guard. "For the central Gulf this is a low- to medium-risk type situation because of the eastern track of the system," said DTN meteorologist Kevin Mahoney. But he added, "this is a very rapidly developing system," with a potentially large wind field.
Shell, the first Gulf of Mexico producer to shut in production this week, said it was restoring output at a platform that is about 200 miles (320 km) southwest of New Orleans.
"With a shift in forecast track, we are beginning the process of restoring production at Stones," the oil major said. Its output at another platform further east in the Gulf, called Appomattox, continues to be curtailed, it said.
Other oil producers evacuated offshore workers and scaled back operations as NHC forecasters called for the second major hurricane in two weeks to appear in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico.
Besides Shell, producers BP, Chevron, and Equinor have withdrawn some offshore staff, and several have paused some oil and gas production ahead of the storm's arrival.

Top News - Agriculture

COLUMN-Promising rebound in US wheat exports could be spoiled by Russia -Braun
After their worst campaign in 52 years, U.S. wheat exports are expected to reach four-year highs in the current marketing year thanks to a strong crop and relatively tame prices.
Robust shipments have recently supported that forecast.
That should boost the United States' relevance in the global wheat market, though the storyline could be foiled by top exporter Russia, which has been pumping out record volumes.
As of Sept. 19, nearly 7.7 million metric tons of U.S. wheat had been inspected for export in the 2024-25 marketing year that started on June 1. That is 39% higher than on the same date a year ago.
August and September are typically the busiest months for U.S. wheat exports, and last week's inspections were the strongest in two years. Recent shipments have been well distributed across top U.S. wheat customers including Mexico, South Korea and the Philippines.
So far, total 2024-25 wheat inspections account for 34% of the full-year export forecast from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That coverage rate is a seven-year high.
Relative to demand, wheat supplies among major exporting countries are set for 17-year lows in 2024-25. This combined with relatively low prices throughout most of this year has helped generate business for U.S. exporters.
USDA's latest estimates suggest the United States will account for 10.4% of global wheat exports in 2024-25, the most in three years and up from 2023-24's all-time low of 8.7%.
Two decades ago, U.S. wheat accounted for about a quarter of all global wheat exports, but the country is still

Chart of the Day



set to be the fourth-largest exporter in 2024-25 despite a lower market share versus years past.

RUSSIA IS KING

Unfortunately, the United States' recent export success offers no guarantees. Over the last decade, there were seven instances where final U.S. wheat exports were lower than what USDA had predicted in September. That includes years with strong early shipments.

An expanding Russian crop and export program may be to blame. In every September over the last decade, USDA had been understating Russian wheat output as compared with final figures. The 2023-24 crop, harvested more than a year ago, is now 6.5 million tons (8%) larger than what USDA was estimating last September.

The agency has the 2024-25 Russian crop pegged at a three-year low of 83 million tons, down 9% on the year, but export potential should not be discounted. Russia's domestic wheat consumption is steady to declining, and the country is now exporting a much larger portion of its harvests than ever before.

Russian wheat export prices have recently held steady below most global values, but they are expected to increase in the coming months as readily exportable supplies wane.

Russian farmers are currently sowing the 2025-26 winter wheat crop, and as of last week, progress was slightly behind a year ago. Extremely dry conditions in some of the top winter wheat regions threaten to reduce total area and/or disrupt early crop emergence.

Forecasts do not show relief coming for at least two weeks.

However, Russian weather woes would have to persist for much longer to meaningfully boost opportunities for peripheral wheat suppliers like the United States over the next year.

(The opinions expressed here are those of the author, a market analyst for Reuters.)

Colombia to produce 15% more coffee in 2024, growers' federation head says

Colombia, the world's top producer of washed arabica, will produce 13 million 60-kg bags of coffee this year, an increase of 15%, thanks to varieties that are more resistant to extreme climate conditions and fungus, the head of the national growers' federation said on Tuesday.

Brazil and Vietnam, the world's top producers of coffee globally, have suffered output difficulties this year because of drought, sending international prices higher.

"We expect the harvest to be around 13 million bags," German Bahamon, the head of the growers' federation, told Reuters in an interview, predicting exports of 12 million bags.

Colombia's coffee harvest was up 2% in 2023 to 11.3 million bags, after three years of production declines because of heavy rains during the weather phenomenon known as La Nina. Exports last year were 10.5 million bags.

Bahamon acknowledged that coffee crops in some provinces are being affected by an El Nino drought which has led to water rationing in Bogota, the capital, but said Colombia's crop is well-placed to ride out dry weather.

"More than 80% of our coffee crop is resistant varieties, not immune, but resistant to phenomena like roya and climate change," Bahamon said, referring to a fungus that causes coffee leaf rust.

Another 100,000 hectares (247,000 acres) of coffee trees will be replaced this year, Bahamon added, up from 77,000 hectares in 2023.

The federation is focused on increasing productivity to some 17 bags per hectare with fertilization, he said, though there is the possibility of expanding Colombia's 842,000-hectare coffee crop.

Bahamon said it was more important to increase productivity per hectare than to expand the crop area, adding that some farmers notch productivity of 36 bags per hectare.

Current prices have helped growers make up for losses last year, he said, and the industry is looking to increase exports of both green and roasted coffee to new markets, such as China.

"China is the sixth-largest destination of Colombian coffee," he said. "There is an enormous opportunity to keep growing."

Top News - Metals

Metals producer backed by Canada province vows to compete with China in rare earths

The Canadian province of Saskatchewan has vowed to compete with China in processing and production of rare earths and become the first North American commercial alternative source for the metals, used to make magnets for electric vehicles and wind turbines.

The Saskatchewan Research Council Rare Earth Processing facility is betting on demand for these magnets to jump in the next couple of years, driven by demand from original equipment manufacturers such as automakers.

The Canadian province, home to copper, potash and uranium mines, is known for its mining prowess.

China controls 95% of the global production and supply of rare earth metals. The near-monopoly allows the country to dictate prices and create uncertainty for end users through export controls.

In the last year, China has placed export controls on some critical metals such as germanium, gallium and antimony, forcing western governments to look for alternatives.
The SRC Rare Earth processing facility has begun production on a commercial scale and expects to hit a production target of 40 tonnes of rare earth metals per month by the end of this year. And it will produce 400 tonnes of the NdPr metals per year, which is enough to produce 500,000 EVs, according to SRC. The facility has already tied up with potential clients in South Korea, Japan and the United States.
"Our focus is to remain competitive within the Asian Metals Price Index," said Muhammad Imran, vice president of the SRC Rare Earth Element. "We are constantly looking to optimise our facility using artificial intelligence applications that would keep our process efficient," Imran said.
The price of rare earth metals such as neodymium praseodymium, known as NdPr, fluctuates between US$65,000 and US$75,000 per tonne, a price determined by the Chinese government.
However, some miners have been asking for a premium price for metals produced outside China, arguing that Chinese metals are produced with low environmental, social and governance standards.
Regardless, Imran said, the market will remain competitive and manufacturers have to be prepared to meet the reference point of the Asian Metals Index.
"This is what the market is telling you the price for rare earth is, if someone can strike a better deal that's great, but premium or no premium the market is going to be competitive," he said.

Nippon Steel's Mori asks USW leadership to 'come to the table'

Nippon Steel Vice Chairman Takahiro Mori said on Tuesday the Japanese company remains committed to talks with the United Steelworkers (USW) labour union over its bid to acquire U.S. Steel.
Separately, Nippon Steel said it would sell its entire stake in South Korean steelmaker Posco Holdings, worth about $820 million based on Monday's closing price in Seoul, amid reports it is looking to offload assets ahead of the U.S. Steel takeover. Nippon Steel said in a statement to the Tokyo exchange it will sell 2.9 million Posco shares in an effort to "improve asset efficiency."
Mori, the key negotiator of the $14.9 billion buyout deal, said USW President David McCall "has not seriously considered any of the proposals that we have presented"

MARKET MONITOR as of 06:45 GMT

Contract	Last	Change	YTD
NYMEX Light Crude	$71.25 / bbl	-0.43%	-0.56%
NYMEX RBOB Gasoline	$2.00 / gallon	-0.49%	-5.25%
ICE Gas Oil	$669.25 / tonne	0.07%	-10.86%
NYMEX Natural Gas	$2.58 / mmBtu	1.14%	2.63%
Spot Gold	$2,656.12 / ounce	-0.02%	28.78%
TRPC coal API 2 / Dec, 24	$115 / tonne	0.22%	18.56%
Carbon ECX EUA	€64.34 / tonne	0.74%	-19.95%
Dutch gas day-ahead (Pre. close)	€36.30 / Mwh	-0.33%	13.97%
CBOT Corn	$4.29 / bushel	-0.46%	-11.42%
CBOT Wheat	$5.95 / bushel	-0.38%	-6.96%
Malaysia Palm Oil (3M)	RM4,030 / tonne	1.05%	8.30%
Index	**Close 24 Sep**	**Change**	**YTD**
Thomson Reuters/Jefferies CRB	341.67	1.23%	13.36%
Rogers International	27.28	0.87%	3.61%
U.S. Stocks - Dow	42,208.22	0.20%	11.99%
U.S. Dollar Index	100.33	-0.13%	-0.99%
U.S. Bond Index (DJ)	453.45	0.11%	5.28%

in a letter to the U.S. Steel employees.
"We just need USW leadership to come to the table. I am hopeful they will do so in the very near future," Mori wrote.
USW International President David McCall responded that "Nippon Steel has never made a promise it couldn't easily undo with the stroke of a pen."
"Its so-called guarantees are all conditional, allowing Nippon executives in Tokyo to change business plans at any time, leaving workers and their communities vulnerable," he added.
The deal has faced opposition from high-profile Democrats and Republicans ahead of the U.S. November presidential elections, including from Democrat candidate Kamala Harris and her Republican competitor Donald Trump. Sources told Reuters last week the U.S. national security panel reviewing the deal let the companies refile their application for approval, delaying a decision on the politically sensitive merger until after the Nov. 5 presidential election.
In the letter, Mori said Nippon Steel was committed to maintaining U.S. Steel's blast furnace operations for the long term and that it will not use slabs made overseas instead of slabs made in USW-represented U.S. Steel facilities.
The Japanese company will honour all U.S. Steel's commitments related to the union's agreements, including in labour, pension and insurance, Mori said, adding that his company will not interfere with U.S. Steel's decisions on trade matters.
The companies plan to close the deal by the end of December, pending regulatory approvals.

Top News - Carbon & Power

ANALYSIS-US nuclear plants won't power up Big Tech's AI ambitions right away

A plan by Microsoft to use the restart of a Three Mile Island nuclear reactor to help power its expanding data centers reflects the tech industry's hopes nuclear energy can be a quick and climate-friendly answer to its massive electricity needs.
But it will be tough to swiftly meet soaring power demand from the data centers behind artificial intelligence with new or resurrected nuclear reactors, as companies will face high regulatory hurdles, potential fuel supply obstacles, and sometimes stiff local and environmental opposition. Microsoft and Constellation Energy announced a deal to restart a unit at the plant in Pennsylvania on Friday, in what would be the first-ever restart for a data center.
At the announcement, Constellation's CEO Joe Dominguez called nuclear power the only energy source available that is both climate-friendly and reliable enough to support Big Tech's needs, implying weather-dependent wind and solar energy may not be up to the task.
The announcement follows a similar agreement in March in which Amazon.com purchased a nuclear-powered datacenter from Talen Energy, and other nuclear contracts for data centers are in the works, power industry sources say. The needs these deals aim to fill are huge.
U.S. data center power use is expected to roughly triple between 2023 and 2030 and will require about 47 gigawatts of new generation capacity, according to Goldman Sachs estimates, which assumed natural gas, wind and solar would fill the gap.
Climate conscious investors and regulators are keen to ensure this spike does not trigger a huge rise in greenhouse gas emissions. For Microsoft and Constellation, at least, the deal is likely to be challenging to bring to fruition.
"Nobody has done this before," said Kate Fowler, global nuclear energy leader for Marsh, an energy insurance broker and risk advisor, about Three Mile Island's attempted restart. "There's going to be challenges that pop up."
The Three Mile Island plant made global headlines in 1979 with a partial meltdown at its Unit 2 reactor, the worst nuclear incident in US history.
The reopening plan covers the Unit 1 reactor at the Pennsylvania plant, which operated safely for decades before being closed five years ago. The $1.6-billion plan would restart Unit 1 by 2028 to offset Microsoft's data-center power consumption in the region. But key permits for the plant's new life have not yet been filed, regulators say.
Getting them could be hard, especially against local opponents who remember the 1979 partial meltdown.
Resuming the use of equipment and infrastructure that has been dormant for five years could also be tricky, said Edwin Lyman, a nuclear safety expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists.
"Constellation should expect to encounter problems that will be costly and time-consuming to fix," Lyman said.
Three Mile Island also will require modified surface and groundwater permits, said Stacey Hanrahan, a spokesperson for the Susquehanna River Basin Commission.
"Any modification request will be thoroughly reviewed, and the project's expected water demands will be evaluated for sustainability and potential adverse impacts to the environment and other users," Hanrahan said.

OTHER HURDLES

There are broader issues that could affect any number of other attempted tech-nuclear link ups in the U.S.
For instance, Washington slapped restrictions on enriched uranium imports following Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Securing licenses from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission could also be tricky for any nuclear project.

"The NRC currently really has a full plate," said Sola Talabi, a nuclear engineer and president of energy risk consultancy Pittsburgh Technical, noting license applications for different types of reactors the agency has never considered before, including high-tech modular plants and the restart of another decommissioned reactor.

Even though President Joe Biden recently signed legislation to streamline the NRC's licensing process, consideration of the queue of new projects by the timelines laid out by companies will challenge NRC personnel and technical resources, Talabi said.

For the Talen project, pocketbook issues have become a problem. Even though the plant is operating, Amazon's data center there faces challenges on the federal level from two regulated utilities who predict it could increase transmission costs that would raise power bills.

Talen disputes the prediction that the public would face higher power bills or reliability problems from the data center, which could consume enough electricity to power all the homes in New Mexico.

In general, simply purchasing power from nuclear plants to run data centers just means diverting it away from other consumers, creating competition for supplies on the grid that could potentially drive up power bills.

In the meantime, the Three Mile Island project is posing a major test of public appetite for expanded nuclear power.

Talabi said four years is likely enough for Constellation to address any technical issues at Three Mile Island, which could be substantial when sensitive components such as steam generators and reactor vessels have been closed for years.

But he emphasized the importance of handling environmental and community concerns that may arise around the site.

"Probably more than anywhere else in the country, the need for community engagement to ensure that we have societal acceptance is going to be critical for restart," Talabi said.

Global plan for early ditch of coal power hits Indonesia hurdle

A G7-backed push to close coal power plants in emerging markets is facing further delays after a July deadline passed without a deal on the early closure of an Indonesian power plant that would be the first to shut under the initiative.

The push against coal comes under the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) with Indonesia, Senegal, South Africa and Vietnam that call for billions of dollars in investments, grants and loans from G7 members, multilateral banks and private lenders to help them transition to low-carbon economies.

Cutting emissions from coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel, is seen as a crucial element of the JETPs if the world is to stave off the worst impacts of climate change.

But a deal on the early shutdown of coal power plants in South Africa remains elusive amid its struggles with rolling blackouts, and hope for proof of concept has turned to Indonesia's 660 megawatt Cirebon-1 plant in West Java province, 220 km (140 miles) east of capital Jakarta.

The legal and financial implications of closing Cirebon-1 are a stumbling block though. Jakarta is worried, too, that costs for replacing it with renewable energy could reach $1.3 billion, mostly in subsidies to cover more expensive renewable power generation, according to the finance ministry.

A new government is taking office in October as well and that could further dent the chance of a deal on Cirebon, said Fabby Tumiwa, a renewables expert and member of the technical team advising Indonesia on its JETP.

"If this is not signed before Oct. 20, I am worried that this matter will be overlooked," Fabby said, citing calls by President-elect Prabowo Subianto for self-sufficiency and energy security that suggest a commitment to coal, which generates two-thirds of Indonesia's electricity.

Prabowo, who takes office on that date, has not commented on Cirebon and has rarely discussed his energy policy, though the retirement of coal power is mentioned in his campaign pledges.

Prabowo's team has not responded to requests for comment.

Under Indonesia's JETP, richer nations have pledged $20 billion to help the Southeast Asian nation with its energy transition, although little of that money has been disbursed.

LEGAL CONCERNS

Earlier this month, Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said the outgoing government was trying to close the Cirebon deal as soon as possible, without giving details.

David Elzinga, team leader for the Asian Development Bank's regional Energy Transition Mechanism programme that is working on the early shutdown scheme, said his group was seeking a binding deal on Cirebon acceptable to both the outgoing and incoming administrations.

"Indonesia has positioned itself to be a leader ... It's really important now that we get the deal done," Elzinga said.

A deal on Cirebon is crucial for the ADB's regional ETM programme as it plans similar deals in countries including Vietnam and the Philippines, as well as for other plants in Indonesia.

To get there, state utility Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PLN) and plant operator PT Cirebon Electric Power (CEP) need to reach a new power purchase agreement, which they failed to do by July, CEP Director Joseph Pangalila told Reuters.

The need for stronger legal protections and a clear road map for retiring coal plants was the main problem, PLN said, given that power generation costs could rise by nearly 90%.

PLN directors also fear a deal could expose them to future criminal charges if anti-graft investigators see the

transaction as burdening the state with losses, JETP advisor Fabby said.
Rachmat Kaimuddin, deputy minister overseeing power infrastructure, acknowledged this at a recent forum, saying stakeholders were considering the legal repercussions that might arise from any closures.
"If we're not careful, some people can get into trouble because it can create what they call state loss," he said.
In June, a former chief executive of state energy firm Pertamina was sentenced to nine years in jail for signing a long-term gas contract that a corruption court said caused state losses of $114 million.
OTHERS TO FOLLOW
"We are anxious that it needs to get done, but at the same time what is important is that the first transaction be done in the best possible manner," said Ramesh Subramaniam, ADB director general and head of the bank's sectors group.
A number of private banks are lined up to invest and a series of new deals could also be kicked off once Cirebon is done, with the ADB having already looked at about 30 other plants in Indonesia, he said.
"Although this has taken time, we have learnt a lot ... and our very clear feeling is the next ones to come will be considerably easier."
Cirebon-1 is a fairly new plant that started up in 2012. A deal would mean it stops operations in 2035 instead of 2042.
Despite running cleaner than older plants, emissions from Cirebon and others around Jakarta are often blamed for Indonesia's chronic pollution, and some of the locals in neighbouring fishing villages would be happy to see it go.
Fisherman Amin, 64, blamed the plant and coal unloading at its jetty for pollution and a scarcity of fish in nearby waters.
"When they first opened, the water was fine, but it became increasingly murky. The green mussel farms here didn't have any harvest in the past two years," he said.
"From the beginning of construction, I was against it."

Top News - Dry Freight

White House monitoring US port talks, considering supply chain impacts
Officials from President Joe Biden's administration are monitoring labor talks but not trying to broker a labor deal to avert an Oct. 1 strike at U.S. East and Gulf Coast ports that handle roughly half of the country's ocean imports, administration officials said on Tuesday.
Negotiations between the International Longshoremen's Association union and the United States Maritime Alliance employer group appear to be deadlocked over pay as the Sept. 30 contract expiration approaches.
A threatened strike by 45,000 ILA-represented workers at three dozen affected ports, including New York and New Jersey, Houston and Savannah, Georgia, would send delays and costs cascading through U.S. supply chains at a time when rising costs for necessities like food, housing and healthcare have become a pivotal issue in the Nov. 5 presidential election. "We are monitoring and assessing potential ways to address impacts to U.S. supply chains related to operations at our ports, if necessary," White House spokesperson Robyn Patterson said. "We continue to encourage the parties to continue negotiating towards an agreement that benefits all sides and prevents any disruption," she said.
The USMX, which includes container carrier and terminal owner Maersk, on Monday said the Department of Labor, the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service and other federal agencies had reached out to the employer group.
Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su and the Department of Labor for more than a month has been in touch with the negotiating parties because establishing lines of communication is standard operating procedure, an administration official said. Any involvement in negotiations would be at the invitation of both the union and employers.
The Biden administration has said the president does not intend to invoke a federal law known as the Taft-Hartley Act to prevent a strike at ports on the East Coast and Gulf of Mexico.
Acting on the invitation of both sides involved in last year's West Coast port negotiations, Biden dispatched Su to help hammer out a deal, which resulted in a 32% pay increase over the life of the new contract.

Argentina grains exports could hit four-year high in 2024/25 season, exchange says
Grains and oilseed output in Argentina could reach up to 143 million metric tons in the 2024/25 season under normal weather conditions, which could boost exports to their highest volume in four years, the Rosario grains exchange said on Tuesday, Given normal conditions, exports of the country's soy, corn, wheat and other crops could rise to 101.5 million tons, the exchange said in a since the 2020/21 season.
Argentina, the top global exporter of soybean oil and flour and a major corn supplier, could however reap a total harvest as low as 128.8 million tons if there is not enough rain, it added.
For now, soil moisture conditions are adequate in Argentina's agricultural core, but the country's western and northern agricultural fields are in urgent need of rainfall.
Soybean planting is due to begin next month, while producers began planting corn in recent weeks.

Picture of the Day

A view shows a power-generating windmill turbine at a wind park in Ligne near Nantes, France, September 23. REUTERS/Stephane Mahe

(Inside Commodities is compiled by Arya Sinha in Bengaluru)

For questions or comments about this report, contact: **commodity.briefs@thomsonreuters.com**

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LSEG
10 Paternoster Square, London, EC4M 7LS, United Kingdom

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