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S. KOREAN ENERGY CONSUMPTION GROWTH UP IN FIRST HALF

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South Korea's energy consumption grew more than 4 percent from a year earlier in the first half of this year, a government report said Monday.

Total energy consumption reached 114.7 million tons of oil equivalent (TOE), up 4.3 percent from the same six-month period in 2004, the country's statistical office and Commerce Ministry said.

Last year, annual energy consumption moved up 2.4 percent, the lowest rise in six years. The yearly increase has been falling since 2002, when it reached 5.2 percent year-on-year. It dropped to 3.1 percent in 2003.

"The gain seems to be a rebound response to the noticeable drop in demand in 2004, as well as consumer preference for large household appliances," a Commerce Ministry official said.

He said such a rise previously occurred when the energy consumption level shot up to 9.3 percent in 1999 after posting a minus 8.1 percent growth in 1998.

By sector, oil consumption rose 2.6 percent from January through June to 259.4 million TOE vis-a-vis the first half of last year, while coal consumption edged up 0.4 percent to 259.4 million TOE. Nuclear energy, which accounts for about 40 percent of the country's electricity needs, grew 19.9 percent to 182.4 million TOE, with demand for liquefied natural gas dropping 1.0 percent during the cited period.