

# China Overtakes U.S. As World's No. 1 Energy Hog

Jenny Barchfield, Associated Press Writer

PARIS (AP) — China has overtaken the United States as the world's largest energy consumer, the International Energy Agency said Tuesday. China immediately questioned the calculation.

The Paris-based agency said China's 2009 consumption of energy sources ranging from oil and coal wind and solar power was equal to 2.265 billion tons of oil, compared to 2.169 billion tons for the U.S.

According to the IEA statistics, China's energy consumption has more than doubled in less than a decade, from 1.107 billion tons in 2000 — fueled by its burgeoning population and rapidly growing manufacturing-based economy.

Energy consumption is a touchy topic for China, which is sensitive to complaints it is pushing up prices on global markets and adding to pollution and emissions of climate-changing gases.

An official with the Chinese Cabinet's National Energy Administration cast doubt on the IEA's statistics, according to a report Tuesday by the official Xinhua News Agency.

"IEA's data on China's energy use is unreliable," said Zhou Xian, adding that the agency "still lacked understanding about China's relentless efforts to cut energy use and emissions, notably the country's aggressive expansion of new energy development."

The report cited data from China's National Bureau of Statistics that said China's energy consumption last year was equal to 2.132 billion tons of oil — less than the IEA figure.

The IEA's head economist, Fatih Birol, told The Associated Press that the organization had used the same sources and methodology as always in compiling the 2009 statistics, which he said were in line with the trend for the past decade.

"The trend is undeniable that the Chinese energy consumption is growing very strongly — which is very legitimate, by the way, considering their population — and the energy from the OECD countries, the U.S., Europe and Japan, is stagnating. They are two major undeniable trends," Birol said in a telephone interview. "There's nothing specific from this year, it's all the same methodologies we used before."

He said that per capita, the United States still consumes five times more energy than China.

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Birol also emphasized China's status as the world's leader in wind and solar power and said the country was also making "major efforts" in nuclear power.

China has invested heavily in hydroelectric dams, wind turbines and nuclear power plants in an attempt to cut rising reliance on imported oil and gas, which its leaders see as a national security risk.

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