SKorean nuclear operator raided in cable probe

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SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's sole nuclear power plant operator said Thursday that investigators raided its offices, a sign that a probe into faulty nuclear plant cables is widening.

Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Co. spokesman Lee Yoon-doing said prosecutors seized documents and computer hard drives from at least four of the company's offices, including its headquarters in southeastern Gyeongju.

An official at the prosecutor's office in Busan, where the country's largest cluster of nuclear plants is located, said the documents seized were in connection with "wrongdoings in supplying components for nuclear power plants." The official declined to be named, citing the sensitive nature of the probe.

He added that prosecutors are seeking court approval for arrest warrants for two employees at Korea Hydro.

Last month, South Korea shut down two nuclear power plants after discovering that a company contracted to conduct performance tests on control cables had fabricated the results.

The cables failed to meet international standards for capacity to withstand changes in voltage and pressure. Another four nuclear reactors that were either shut down for scheduled maintenance or under construction were also using cables that had failed tests. The resumption of operations in those plants was delayed while the cables were being replaced.

The state-run nuclear safety commission previously filed suit against the private

test company and the cable maker, but Thursday's raid shows officials at Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power may eventually be implicated in alleged wrongdoing. The company is 100 percent owned by state-owned Korea Electric Power Corp.

The revelations on the substandard cables deepened public worries about the nuclear industry responsible for a third of South Korea's power supply. The nuclear industry has been mired in corruption and scandals; the substandard cable probe is just the latest.

South Korea is bracing for what its energy minister called "unprecedented power shortages" after it idled nuclear plants. The government is introducing mandatory power cuts for the summer, when demand is at its peak.

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