

ITER project partners to continue talking despite lack of progress



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TOKYO (AFP) - The six partners in the ITER nuclear fusion project have agreed to continue talks together in March, despite the lack of progress in breaking the deadlock over the choice of site at a weekend meeting, a Japanese government source said.



"The situation is still in deadlock, and much to our regret, no progress could be made," a senior official from the Japanese science ministry told AFP after returning from Vienna where the meeting between European Union (news - web sites), Russia, China, the United States, South Korea (news - web sites) and Japan took place.

"As in the past, the countries taking part in the decision did not manage to incline clearly in favour of one of the two sites," he said.

Two sites, the French town of Cadarache and the northern Japanese village of Rokkasho-mura, are vying to host the 10-billion-dollar International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor project to achieve nuclear fusion, billed as the clean, safe, inexhaustible energy source of the future.

The United States and South Korea are backing Japan while France has the support of the European Union, China and Russia.

The official stressed the importance of the six parties continuing to meet "to try to find a resolution to the current impasse."

He added that at least during the Vienna meeting the six "agreed to address the technical problems together. These discussions will take place in March."

On Friday Japanese economic daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun quoted a ruling coalition source as saying that Japan might start a new nuclear fusion plan if it failed to break the deadlock with France over the location of the project.

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