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Koizumi, French FM discuss Iraqi reconstruction

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TOKYO, March 2 (Xinhuanet) -- Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and visiting French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepinreaffirmed their intentions Tuesday to cooperate on specific projects for rebuilding Iraq.

In their meeting at the premier's office, the two also agreed that Japan and France should mix competition and cooperation in developing their ties, according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

On Iraq, the two stressed the importance of international efforts and of United Nations involvement in the reconstruction ofthe war-torn country and said they hoped for good bilateral cooperation projects to be worked out.

De Villepin and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi are scheduled to finalize details of the assistance schemes when they meet in Tokyo in the evening and announce them after their talks,

The projects are expected to cover plans to work together for restoring cultural facilities such as museums and libraries as well as archeological sites and for training Iraqi athletes hopingto take part in this summer's Athens Olympics.

Referring to the rivalry between Japan and France concerning which country will host a nuclear fusion reactor for the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project, Koizumi and de Villepin agreed bilateral ties can constitute both competition and cooperation.

The candidate sites for the international project to build the world's first prototype nuclear fusion reactor are the Japanese village of Rokkasho in Aomori Prefecture and the southern French town of

De Villepin, who arrived here Sunday for a three-day visit to Japan, also met earlier Tuesday with House of Representatives Speaker Yohei Kono. It is the foreign minister's first trip to Japan since he took office in March 2002. Enditem

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