

Japan to reward to S.Korea for support on ITER reactor



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Japan is looking to reward South Korea with construction orders in a multibillion-dollar experimental nuclear project to reward Seoul for backing Tokyo's failed bid.

After years of wrangling, France last year beat out Japan to host ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor), a revolutionary project meant to create the energy of the future by emulating the power of the sun.

"We are discussing allocating to South Korean companies, orders from what Japanese companies can get, considering factors such as the longstanding support we received from South Korea in our bid to host ITER," a science and technology ministry official said Monday.

The Mainichi Shimbun newspaper reported that Japan has decided to give 20 percent, or about 11 billion yen (93 million dollars), worth of its ITER construction orders to the South Koreans.

South Korea, which threw its support behind Japan before bilateral relations deteriorated last year in a row over history, had complained that only Tokyo won contracts as a consolation for losing the bid, the daily said.

The United States also supported Japan's proposal to build ITER in northern Aomori prefecture. The European Union's successful bid to construct the reactor in the southern French town of Cadarache was backed by Russia and China.

India is also involved in the project but joined after the French site was chosen.

ITER, which is expected to cost 10 billion euros (12 billion dollars) over 30 years, seeks to create energy that would be cheap, clean, safe and almost infinite.

Instead of splitting the atom -- the principle behind current nuclear plants -- the project seeks to harness nuclear fusion, the power of the sun and the stars.

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