

Japan, France Vying for Korea's Nuclear Project

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France and Japan recently have sent high-ranking officials to South Korea, since it will play the key role in the selection of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) site which will begin construction in 2005 with an estimated cost of \$10 billion.

France's Cadarache region and Japan's Rokkashomura region are two candidates for the experimental site, which will begin operation in 2014. The six-member countries of ITER will select the site in a meeting late this month and Korea is expected to be the key player in the vote.

French Minister for Research and New Technologies Claudie Haignere met with South Korean Minister of Science and Technology Oh Myung here Monday to ask for Korea's support for its Cadarache region in the selection of the ITER site. Haignere promised privileges in fusion energy businesses and supports for Korea's own fusion energy research project, Kstar, on the condition of Korea voting for EU. Haignere also met Kwon O-kyu, the presidential secretary for policy planning, to deliver French President Jacques Chirac's letter to president Rho Moo-hyun.

Japan deployed Science and Technology Minister Takeo Kawamura to Korea on Jan. 14, to attract Korea's vote to its Rokkasho-mura region in the competition with EU.

ITER, a joint project of EU, Japan, China, Russia, U.S., and South Korea, is the largest international collaborative scientific and technological project second to Space Station project. EU, Russia and China are allegedly standing by EU, while U.S. is firmly supporting Japan for the ITER site.

Korea, which will pay for 10 percent, or \$1 billion, of the total cost of the project, was allegedly favorable to Japan in a ITER meeting last December but didn't express its official stand so far.

Fusion is a relatively safe, clean and sustainable energy source and considered the next-generation energy of the planet.

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