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Revolutionary nuclear plant still on the cards. 01/02/2005. ABC News Online

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Revolutionary nuclear plant still on the cards

Japan says negotiations with the European Union (EU) are continuing for the right to build a revolutionary nuclear reactor project, after reports of a fresh offer to settle an impasse over its location.

"We keep all communication channels open and running. Our talks with the EU are continuing," said a science and technology ministry official without elaborating further.

Japan and France are vying to build the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), which has been billed as a test bed for a safe and inexhaustible energy source.

However, ITER talks among six parties on where to base the multi-billion dollar project have been deadlocked.

The United States and South Korea support Japan's offer to build ITER in Rokkasho-mura, a northern Japanese village near the Pacific Ocean, while the EU, China and Russia back France's bid for the project to be based in Cadarache, southern France.

On Monday, the business newspaper *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* said Japan had rejected a proposal from the EU which required Tokyo to give up the project in return for the EU extending preferential orders to Japanese companies working on ITER.

Previously, Japan had proposed to the EU that Japan would lodge about 57 billion yen worth of orders with European companies.

Tokyo also said it would double the previously proposed quota of full-time researchers in Japan from the EU to about 40 and foot half the costs of the ITER research facilities that would be in the EU, the newspaper said.

Japan's rejection came during an unofficial meeting in mid-January and the two sides would meet again before the end of March, the newspaper said.

-AFP

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