

ITER site decision yet to be made: Japanese official



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Japan has made no decision on the siting the revolutionary ITER nuclear reactor, an issue on which it has been deadlocked with the European Union, a spokesman for the country's foreign minister said.

The declaration follows comments from the EU presidency that Tokyo is prepared to discuss the possibility of siting the reactor in France instead of Japan.

"We have not made any sort of policy or decision on this issue," said Hatsuhisa Takashima, who is with the Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimuraat in Paris, on the multi-billion dollar project that should one day generate inexhaustible supplies of electricity.

"Our position is to have a discussion on that subject with the French," said Takashima, adding he wanted to "bring about a mutually acceptable solution between the EU and Japan".

The declaration comes after Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi met with EU leaders in Luxembourg on Monday.

Jeannot Krecke, the economics minister of Luxembourg which holds the rotating EU presidency, said Monday Japan had agreed to discuss siting ITER in Europe.

Krecke also said that "for the first time" in the Japan-EU discussions over ITER, the Europeans had sensed "at least an opening of minds that we have not seen up to now."

The 25-member EU wants ITER to be built in France but is willing to conduct much of the research in Japan, and has threatened to go it alone unless Japan drops its rival bid, leaving six-party talks in deadlock for months.

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 the bid of the southern French town of Cadarache.

The multi-billion-dollar plant would emulate the sun's nuclear fusion and is designed to generate inexhaustible supplies of electricity at some time in the future, but is not expected to be operational before 2050.

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