

Japan to ask EU to 'joint host' revolutionary nuclear reactor



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Japan will ask the European Union to declare it a "joint host" of a revolutionary nuclear energy project even if the reactor is located in France, a newspaper said.

The Nihon Keizai Shimbun said Monday the Japanese government did not want to abandon its bid for the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) out of concern for the wishes of northern Aomori prefecture which wants to host the multibillion-dollar project.

A public renunciation of the ITER bid could lead the local government to refuse an unrelated proposal to store spent nuclear fuel, damaging Japan's overall nuclear energy program, the business daily said.

"Joint host" status would give Japan a more active role in ITER, making the Aomori village of Rokkasho-mura a research hub even if the reactor goes to the French town of Cadarache.

But the report said South Korea has unofficially expressed objections that Japan would get so much out of ITER unlike other participating nations that will not host the reactor.

Japan and EU have already agreed that Japan would receive 57 billion yen (533 million dollars) worth of contracts to build facilities related to ITER and that a new analysis center for ITER would be built in Japan, according to the Nihon Keizai.

The two sides have also agreed that any later-generation ITER reactor would go to Japan, it said.

Talks have been stalled for months on ITER with the United States and South Korea supporting Japan's bid while China and Russia back the EU bid to build it in France.

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