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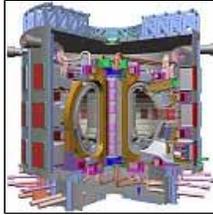
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Help



French minister seeks Spanish support over ITER energy project



French Research Minister Claudie Haignere headed to Spain on Wednesday to whip up support for the European Union's bid to host the ITER experimental nuclear fusion reactor project, diplomats said.

The multi-billion-dollar International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project will be located either in the French southeastern town of Cadarache -- the EU's bid -- or the northern Japanese village of Rokkasho-mura.

The French minister is "campaigning to mobilise Europeans, and particularly the Spanish because they would host part of the project," the sources said.

France hopes that Spain will be able to influence the position of the United States, which this month came out in support of Japan's bid, they added.

Haignere is due to meet Spanish Foreign Minister Ana Palacio at 7:00 pm (1800 GMT), followed by a specific discussion of the ITER project with Spanish Science and Research Minister Juan Costa, Spanish ministerial sources said.

ITER aims to be a test bed for what is billed as the clean, safe, inexhaustible energy source of the future, emulating the sun's nuclear fusion.

The project, which involves China, the EU, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States, is not expected to generate electricity before 2050.

Among the project's backers, the EU has won support from China and Russia to site ITER at Cadarache, while Japan has the backing of South Korea and the United States, which has said Japan offers "the superior site".

Haignere said this week however that South Korea may reconsider its position and back the EU site.

Under the EU plan, Spain would host the agency that manages future contributions to the ITER project and would hold one of two EU posts in the international consortium in charge of the project.

The six ITER partners failed to choose the winning bid at a meeting in Washington on December 20 and a fresh meeting has been set for next month.

[ITER - International Fusion Energy Organisation - further information](#)

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