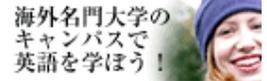


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Russia sticks to its guns, backs France for fusion reactor

MOSCOW (Kyodo) Senior Japanese and Russian officials failed Monday to iron out their differences over the site of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor.

Yamato Inaba, senior vice science minister, repeated Japan's desire to host the world's first prototype nuclear fusion reactor in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, Japanese officials said.

But Igor Borovkov, first deputy minister of atomic energy, said Russia favors a compromise plan suggesting construction of the main reactor unit in France and a monitoring facility in Rokkasho.

"France, the sole candidate from Europe, and Japan still have time to make their locations for ITER construction most attractive," Yevgeny Velikhov of the Russian Academy of Sciences told the ITAR-Tass news agency after the meeting.

Inaba, senior vice minister of the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry, is heading the delegation to Russia. Science minister Takeo Kawamura visited Moscow in January for talks with Atomic Energy Minister Alexander Rumyantsev.

The six parties to the ITER project have been divided over the location of the prototype reactor. At their ministerial meeting late last year, the U.S. and South Korea supported the Japanese plan, while Russia and China endorsed a European Union plan to build the prototype in France. They are expected to decide this month.

Hoping to resolve the deadlock, Japan has proposed to France that a data analysis and remote control center for the project be built there and the fusion reactor be built in Japan.

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