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Japan denies report on France winning bid for nuke fusion project

A Japanese government official on Tuesday denied an earlier report that France will host a global nuclear fusion project after Japan signaled it would give up its bid in return for compensation and said it has not given up on its bid.

Reuters reported Monday, citing a European Union source, that the European Union was confident a deal to be outlined Tuesday would locate the \$12 billion International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor project in France and that Japan had signaled it would give up its bid in return for some form of compensation.

Yasufumi Tanahashi, minister in charge of education, science and technology, told a news conference that the report "lacks foundation," indicating that there has been no change in Japan's policy to make efforts to host the ITER project.

"The report is regrettable as it only brought confusion," he said, adding that he had "never" heard of Japan giving up on the bid as reported.

Japan, the European Union, the United States, Russia, China and South Korea, which are collaborating on the ITER project, have yet to make major headway on where to build the reactor as the United States and South Korea support Japan hosting the reactor, while Russia and China favor having it located in the European Union.

Negotiators from the European Union, the United States, South Korea, Japan, Russia and China began meeting on Monday in Vienna, headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to seek a deal.

While the European Union, backed by China and Russia, wanted ITER to be built in Cadarache, the United States along with South Korea had preferred Rokkasho, a remote fishing village in northeastern Japan.

The ITER project is aimed at creating the world's first sustained nuclear fusion reaction, similar to the energy-producing process taking place constantly in the sun.

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