



Japan, EU reach basic agreement over ITER

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The government and the European Union on Thursday reached a basic agreement over the role of host and non-hosting countries in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor project during talks in Geneva, a government official said.

According to the official, the content of the deal, which has not been released, includes a condition that the facility's host country will submit an order of about 57 billion yen in construction work for the main reactor to the unsuccessful candidate country. Japan and France, the EU's candidate, have been bidding to host the facility.

It also stipulates that:

- The losing candidate will supply 20 percent of workers to the facility.
- Reactor-related facilities, such as a material research laboratory, will be built in the unsuccessful bidder's country.

The ITER project participants--Japan, China, the EU, Russia, South Korea and the United States--have been divided over where to locate the facility.

The government is preparing to enter final talks with the respective parties with a view to give up its bid to build the plant in Rokkashomura, Aomori Prefecture. As a result, it is highly likely that the facility will now be built in Cadarache, southern France.

The facility's final location will be officially decided at a ministerial meeting of the six parties in June.

Thursday's agreement over the roles of the host and non-hosting countries between Japan and the EU likely will lead the government to build reactor-related facilities in Japan. The talks in Geneva were held between Tetsuhisa Shirakawa, the Education, Science and Technology Ministry's deputy minister, and European Commission Research Director General Achilleas Mitsos.

According to the government official, the host country will bear 50 percent of the 570 billion yen construction cost, while the unsuccessful bidder will finance 10 percent of the cost. China, Russia, South Korea and the United States will bear the remainder.

The European Commission will release the content of the agreement Friday.

After the vice-ministerial meeting, Francois D'Aubert, French deputy minister of research, said in a statement that a "technical agreement" had been reached at the Geneva meeting.

D'Aubert said: "This balanced agreement could lead Japan to decide not to be the host country for the reactor. If that's the case, France would welcome the ITER reactor in Cadarache. The end is in sight."

