

EU could go it alone on nuclear fusion plant

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The EU will go ahead with locating the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) in France if no agreement can be reached with Japan by the end of the year over where to build the plant, according to EU research ministers.

Talks over the world's first nuclear fusion reactor have stalled because Japan and France are fighting over the right to house the plant.

The EU together with Russia and China want the 10 billion dollar (7.5 bn euro) plant in Cadarache, near Marseille in France. But the US, South Korea and Tokyo support the northern fishing village of Rokkasho-mura in Japan.

French paper Liberation quotes French research minister Francois d'Aubert as saying, "we are going to build Iter in Cadarache (in France) ... [the decision] is irrevocable".

But Japanese officials hit back, with one saying, according to Le Monde, that the EU was "breaking international laws".

"Japan is better placed both financially and technologically to house the ITER project", said the official.

Whereas today's nuclear reactors work by smashing atoms apart, the fusion technique binds atoms together to produce energy.

But to produce nuclear fusion, plasma needs to reach the temperature of the Sun and be concentrated and confined for a long time. So far this has not been possible.

The EU is set to finance 40 percent of the project.

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