

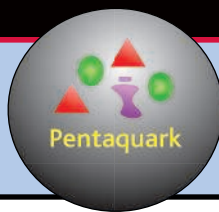
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Probing Iceland's biggest killer



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Doubts about an exotic particle



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Did running give humans an edge?



to test antiviral drugs without using the smallpox virus itself and would focus on replication genes rather than virulence genes, Wittek says. Even so, such experiments are potentially more troubling than those with GFP, says Jonathan Tucker of the Monterey Institute of International Studies' Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Washington, D.C., because

the committee said such work could be done in enhanced biosafety level 3 (BSL-3) laboratories outside of CDC and VECTOR instead of the more secure BSL-4 labs. "My concern is that as the research proliferates, WHO does not have the resources to exercise proper oversight," he says.

But Wittek says that any lab proposing

such work would have to go through an extensive review. He said the committee hoped that its approval would speed efforts to find effective treatments for smallpox—one of the goals cited by those who argued for continued research. "It moves you closer to the day when you can destroy the remaining stocks," he says.

—GRETCHEN VOGEL

## FUSION ENERGY

# Euro Meeting Holds Key to ITER Project

**CAMBRIDGE, U.K.**—The clock is ticking toward midnight for the fragile coalition trying to build the \$6 billion ITER fusion reactor.

This fall research ministers from the European Union (E.U.) set a deadline of 26 November for a decision to begin building the reactor near the French town of Cadarache. But the six partners in ITER are not playing ball: They are currently split down the middle between Cadarache and Japan's proposed site at Rokkasho. Last week, at a meeting in Vienna, Austria, neither the E.U. nor Japan could persuade the other to back down despite both sides claiming to have made major concessions. E.U. officials say they are working to keep the collaboration together, but the ministers' deadline carries with it the implied threat that the E.U. could proceed without the support of all six partners. This week the E.U.'s executives met to prepare recommendations to the ministers.

ITER's goal is to achieve a sustained fusion reaction and generate more power than it consumes. If it works, it promises almost limitless energy, using deuterium extracted from water as fuel and producing little radioactive waste. But first it must be built, at a cost of \$13 billion over its expected 30-year life (*Science*, 13 February, p. 940). Last December the United States and Korea decided to back the Japanese site, whereas Russia and China favored Cadarache (*Science*, 2 January, p. 22). Since then each site has been vetted further; delegations have crisscrossed the globe, but neither side has blinked. To break the impasse, the partners have studied the possibility of adding other facilities to the ITER project that would accelerate the move toward commercial fusion power.

In September, frustrated by the impasse, research ministers from the 25 E.U. member

states set the 26 November deadline and implied that they would wait no longer on plans to begin construction (*Science*, 1 October, p. 26). The threat of such a unilateral move infuriated the Japanese, who accused the E.U. negotiators of displaying an arrogance that could undermine not just ITER but other international scientific collaborations as well.

In response, Japan quietly began promot-

ing Japan's overtures as a sign that it was willing to support Cadarache, a position reported erroneously by Reuters news service the day before the 9 November ITER meeting in Vienna. That inaccurate information got the talks off on the wrong foot, says one E.U. source, who added that the meeting ended on friendlier terms after the E.U. delegation restated its support for a six-partner solution.

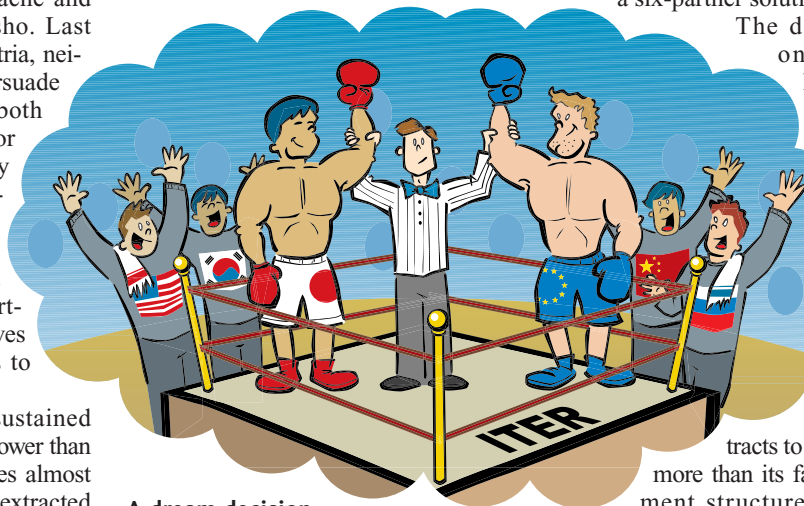
The deal that the E.U. put on the table would have it contribute 58% of ITER's cost, with four other partners giving 10% each and Japan footing 18%—more than the other nonhosts would give. For its extra money, Japan would get "privileged" status in the project, winning more than 18% of the con-

tracts to provide components and more than its fair share of the management structure. The extra money—contributions would add up to 116% of ITER's nominal cost—would go toward the additional facilities, which Japan would take its pick of. Without showing his hand, Ohtake says that the E.U. proposal "is less generous to the nonhost" than what Japan has offered Europe if the reactor went to Rokkasho.

E.U. officials remain confident that the ITER partners ultimately will embrace the Cadarache site. But continued disagreement remains a possibility, too. If negotiations break down, says one E.U. official, "ITER must still take place." But going ahead with less than six partners "would be a failure," too.

—DANIEL CLERY

With reporting by Dennis Normile in Tokyo.



### A dream decision.

The six ITER partners are looking for a way to anoint both Europe and Japan as winners in the contest to host the reactor.

ing a deal that would minimize the differences between being host and being nonhost. Under the original plan, says Japan's chief negotiator Satoru Ohtake, "being host is like winning the lottery, and being nonhost is like winning nothing." Japan's goal, he explained, was to reach a point at which choosing a site would be "like tossing a coin." But it hasn't fared well, he admits: "I don't think the E.U. ever really imagined being nonhost."

In fact, some E.U. negotiators misinter-