



Inpex sees delay in start of Ichthys LNG output

TOKYO, Feb 27 (Reuters) –

Inpex Holdings Inc <1605.T>, Japan's top oil and gas developer, said on Wednesday that the start of liquefied natural gas (LNG) production from the Ichthys project in northwest Australia is likely to be delayed from the original plan of by the end of 2012.

An Inpex spokesman said the start of output is likely to be delayed until at least sometime in 2013, but the exact schedule has not been set.

Inpex has a 76 percent stake in the project, while oil major Total has the rest.

Meanwhile, Inpex also said on Wednesday it and Total have signed a project facilitation agreement with the Northern Territory Government in Australia, and that the two would consider Darwin as a possible site to construct an LNG plant.

Darwin is 850 km (530 miles) away from the Ichthys field, but it offers some benefits in terms of infrastructure, Inpex said.

Inpex Managing Director Jiro Okada said in a statement the company would take a serious look at constructing LNG facilities on Middle Arm in Darwin.

However, Inpex said its first preference is still to construct an onshore LNG plant on the Maret Islands in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, which is about 190 kilometres from the Ichthys field.

At its peak, the Ichthys project is projected to produce about 8 million tonnes of LNG a year and 100,000 barrels per day of condensate and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) per day.

Okada said its joint venture will make a decision later this year on the best location for the onshore LNG plant. (Reporting by Osamu Tsukimori; Editing by Chris Gallagher)