



Govt hopes more money will secure ITER project

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The government intends to increase its contribution to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project by 50 billion yen if Japan is selected as the host nation for the project, according to a government source.

The decision is seen as having been taken to counter the European Union, which selected the southern French town Cadarache as its candidate site, and which also plans to increase its contribution to the project.

At the ITER meeting to be held in June in Vienna, the government will officially announce the plan to senior officials of countries involved in the project, hoping the latest cash inducement will clinch the selection of Rokkashomura, Aomori Prefecture, as the site for the project.

Member countries of the ITER project are Canada, China, South Korea, Russia and the United States in addition to Japan and EU nations.

Japan and France are the last two nations competing to host the project.

Initially, the host country was to pay about 270 billion yen of the 570 billion yen or so needed to construct the main part of the reactor.

South Korea and the United States supported Rokkashomura, while China and Russia backed the French town, and a final decision has been pending since December.

To break the impasse, Japan and the EU have held negotiations three times this year. During the talks, the EU suggested that the plant could be built in Japan if Japan was willing to increase its contribution to help cover the construction cost of ITER-related facilities to be built in France.

In response, the Liberal Democratic Party and other parties asked the government to increase the contribution to the project, which it agreed to do if Japan is selected as the host country.

After ministries and agencies that are involved in the project, such as the Education, Science and Technology Ministry, discuss the issue with the Finance Ministry, the Japanese delegation will present its proposal at June's meeting.

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