



Contents of ITER deal revealed

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Details of an agreement on the roles of host and non-hosting countries involved in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor that is likely to be hosted in France were revealed Thursday.

Under the deal struck between Japan and the European Union, the unsuccessful bidder will be given the post of secretary general at ITER headquarters. ITER-related facilities also will be built in that country.

The final decision on the location of ITER is expected to be made during ministerial-level talks among the six nations involved, scheduled to be held late next month in Russia.

Japan is expected to enter the final talks with an eye to giving up its bid to host the ITER in Rokkashomura, Aomori Prefecture, leaving the way clear for the reactor to be built at a rival site in Cadarache, France.

The view that the reactor will be hosted in France increasingly has been shared in Japan, even among members of ruling parties who made efforts to win the ITER bid.

The planned ITER is an experimental facility for a thermonuclear reactor designed to produce power by fusing the nucleus of heavy hydrogen and tritium at more than 100 million degrees. Besides Japan and the EU, four other countries--China, Russia, South Korea and the United States--have participated in the 1.3 trillion yen project.

Japan and the EU reportedly agreed on the deal at a vice-ministerial meeting on May 5.

According to a document obtained by The Yomiuri Shimbun, the host country will shoulder 50 percent of the 570 billion yen construction and operational costs while the unsuccessful candidate will bear 10 percent of the costs.

The remainder will be funded by the other four participating countries.

In return for its concession, the document also says, the unsuccessful bidder will house reactor-related facilities, such as a remote experiment facility and a material research

laboratory resistant to temperatures involved in thermonuclear fusion. The country also will supply 20 percent of workers to ITER facilities.

The four other countries involved other than Japan and EU have reportedly been informed of the content of the deal. Government sources said South Korea and the United States, who backed the Japanese bid, likely would agree to the deal.

Education, Science and Technology Minister Nariaki Nakayama is scheduled to attend the six-party ministerial talks.

Senior members of the Liberal Democratic Party's Policy Research Council said they have acknowledged that Rokkashomura is unlikely to win the bid, and that government and ruling parties would soon start coordinating with the intention to concede the ITER site to France.

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