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## **LDP group warns against reported gov't move to give up ITER bid**

(Kyodo) \_ A group of ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers agreed Friday to continue to seek to bring the world's first nuclear fusion reactor to a site in northeastern Japan and warned against a reported move by the government to give up its bid to host it, group lawmakers said.

The LDP group, which is promoting nuclear fusion energy, also agreed to again urge the government to work toward hosting the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, the lawmakers said.

"There have been media reports saying that Japan will give up its bid to host (ITER), but they are wrong," former Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Takeo Hiranuma, who heads the group, was quoted as saying at the outset of a meeting of the lawmakers.

"Japan has made good proposals, and the lawmakers' group should be united in seeking the bid as we face the final stage" of site selection, he was quoted as saying.

Japan and the European Union have been negotiating over the ITER site, and the two sides are seeking to reach a political resolution by the Group of Eight summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, in July.

The European Union wants ITER to be sited in Cadarache, southern France.

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Tadamori Oshima, deputy head of the group who was chief of the then Science and Technology Agency in 2000, told reporters after the meeting, "We agreed that Cabinet ministers and lawmakers as well as the prime minister's office should be resolved to seek the facility."

According to the lawmakers, one of the participants said in the meeting that Japan should not give up the bid due to its tight fiscal situation, because Japan cannot rely on fossil fuel indefinitely.

A senior member of the group responded that some negative views on hosting ITER have been expressed within the government but that the group should warn against such a move, the lawmakers said.

Although the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry has shown resolve to continue to seek to host the ITER project, the Japanese government is said to be considering giving up the bid as the Finance Ministry has expressed concern over the huge costs involved.

The ITER project -- which involves China, the European Union, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States -- is expected to take 30 years, including 10 years for construction. The cost is estimated at about \$13 billion, or 1.3 trillion yen.

Japan and the European Union have reached an agreement over conditions for hosting construction, but the site selection process remains something of a tug-of-war.

The ITER plant is an experimental facility for thermonuclear fusion, at which nuclear fusion reactions that occur on the sun are to be produced by fusing the nuclei of heavy hydrogen and tritium at more than 100 million C. The energy produced from 1 gram of fuel in the facility is equivalent to that of 8 tons of oil.

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