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Aomori, Ibaraki towns to bid to host experimental reactor

Japan will recommend two municipalities as possible sites for the construction of an international experimental nuclear fusion reactor.

The village of Rokkasho, in Aomori Prefecture, and the town of Naka, in Ibaraki Prefecture, have been selected, government sources said Saturday.

Tokyo will propose at an intergovernmental meeting that an international thermonuclear experimental reactor be built in either of the two municipalities, the sources said. The meeting is to be held June 4 in France.

The ITER is being jointly developed by Japan, Europe, Russia and Canada. It is designed to generate electricity through nuclear fusion in a manner similar to solar energy creation.

The Japanese government originally intended to select one municipality as a candidate site, but decided to put forward both Rokkasho and Naka as both are keen to host the ITER, the sources said.

The Council for Science and Technology Policy, headed by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, will finalize the plan to recommend the two municipalities during a meeting on May 29, they said.

Canada has already chosen a candidate site to host the reactor, while the European Union is expected to recommend both France and Spain as possibilities during the upcoming talks.

The ITER is designed to demonstrate the scientific and technological feasibility of fusion energy for peaceful purposes. It will be the first fusion device to produce thermal energy at the same level as an electricity-producing power station.

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