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Japan eyes Ikeda as candidate to head ITER organization

(Kyodo) _ Japan will recommend Kaname Ikeda, a former bureaucrat with science and technology expertise, as the candidate to head the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor project organization, the science ministry said Tuesday.

Ikeda, 59, who has been serving as ambassador to Croatia since April 2003, is likely to be formally approved as director general of the organization to run the project in a conference of the six concerned parties in November, according to officials of the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry.

An official said they chose Ikeda because "he is knowledgeable about scientific technical administration as a former official of the Science and Technology Agency, and he has also taken part in major international projects, including the International Space Station project."

Japan and the European Union had agreed that the European Union will support a Japanese candidate in exchange for Japan's giving up its bid to host the world's first nuclear fusion reactor. ITER will be set up in Cadarache, France.

The four others, China, Russia, South Korea and the United States, have largely agreed to support Japan's pick in September, according to Japanese officials.

A graduate of the University of Tokyo, Ikeda entered the former Science and Technology Agency in 1968 and served in posts such as a director of the former National Space Development Agency of Japan.

<http://asia.news.yahoo.com/051018/kyodo/d8da5vs81.html>