

Japan may delay process for picking casino host cities: media

Written by Administrator

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FILE PHOTO: A dealer picks up chips on a mock black jack casino table during a photo opportunity at an international tourism promotion symposium in Tokyo September 28, 2013. REUTERS/Yuya Shino/File Photo

TOKYO (Reuters) - The Japanese government is considering delaying the process for selecting casino host cities amid a bribery scandal that has seen the arrest of a ruling-party lawmaker, the Asahi and other local media reported on Tuesday.

The government had originally planned to set by this month a basic framework to determine guidelines for selecting cities, but is now looking to postpone that process, the Asahi reported, citing government and ruling party sources.

Last month, prosecutors arrested Tsukasa Arimoto, a Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmaker previously in charge of casino policy, on suspicion he accepted bribes from a company seeking to build a casino in Japan.

The arrest has hardened public opposition to the already unpopular plan to allow casinos in Japan.

Hamstrung by a shrinking economy, population and tax base, Japan is pushing to boost tourism through "integrated resorts" - Las Vegas-style complexes that include casinos, shopping arcades and conference centers. Some analysts say the casino market could be worth \$20 billion or more annually.

The government has authorized licenses to build three integrated resorts and is expected to officially receive bids from interested localities in 2021.

Potential bidders include Tokyo, Yokohama and Osaka, Japan's three largest cities, and smaller ones including Nagasaki and Wakayama.

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