

Private fund for former sex slaves appears likely

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The government is likely to decide on the creation of a private-sector fund that would give "consolation money" to women who were forced to provide sex to Imperial Japanese troops before and during World War II, coalition sources said Friday.

A subcommittee of a coalition project team on issues related to the 50th anniversary next year of the end of World War II met Friday and agreed to set up the fund, which would be sponsored by the private sector, to give money to the wartime sex slaves, the sources said.

The subcommittee plans to compile a draft proposal on

Tuesday, the sources said.

If the fund is established, the money will go not only to wartime sex slaves but also to "future-oriented" projects designed to promote the human rights and welfare of women, the sources said.

The government is likely to cover only part of the fund's secretariat expenses, they said.

The subcommittee also agreed to have Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama send signed letters of apology to individual women who were forced into sexual slavery for the military, the sources said.

The details and procedures of the fund, such as who will

be designated as former military sex slaves, have yet to be discussed, the sources said.

The subcommittee had decided on Nov. 18 to suspend discussions on the fund for the time being, but it resumed efforts Monday at the request of Chief Cabinet Secretary Kozo Igarashi, the sources said.

Although the Social Democratic Party of Japan wanted to have the government pay compensation to individual women who were forced into sexual slavery, the party failed to have its stance reflected in the proposal the government is likely to accept next week, the sources said.

At one point Friday, the

SDPJ issued a memorandum stating, in part, that the government must pay compensation to "former military comfort women," in view of the fact they are still suffering mentally and physically, and still face social discrimination, according to the sources.

Although some members of New Party Sakigake supported the SDPJ's position, the Socialists did not push their view strongly enough to have it taken up, the sources said.

A few SDPJ members said they will do their best to push the demand, but lawmakers belonging to the Liberal Democratic Party and New Party

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