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4 Issue Today

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The Nuri space launch vehicle is seen at Naro Space Center in Goheung, South Jeolla Province, May 3.

Courtesy of KARI

Nuri rocket to carry multi-purpose satellites

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GOHEUNG — Preparations for the third launch of the Nuri rocket, scheduled for May 24, are smoothly underway at the Naro Space Center in the southwestern county of Goheung, according to the Ministry of Science and ICT and Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI), May 3.

Given the first and second launches were test flights, they said that the May 24 launch is significant in that Nuri will carry out the mission of placing eight satellites that are to be utilized for scientific research purposes into space orbit.

In its first launch on October 21, 2021, the Nuri rocket, also known as Korean Space Launch Vehicle II (KSLV-II), failed to place a dummy satellite into orbit.

However, its second launch on June 21, 2022, saw Nuri successfully place a dummy satellite and a performance verification satellite into a low orbit of 700 kilometers above the Earth, making Korea the seventh nation in the world to launch a space rocket using domestically developed technology to place an over 1-ton satellite into orbit.

Lee Sang-ryool, president of KARI, said that the significance of the third launch is that it is the first challenge to go into space with satellites that will actually be used.



Lee Sang-ryool, president of KARI, speaks during a press conference held at Naro Space Center in Goheung, South Jeolla Province, May 3.

Courtesy of KARI

"For the first and second launches of the Nuri rocket, we focused on developing our own launch vehicle. Based on that success, the third launch will be an enhancement project to improve the reliability and stabilize the launch vehicle," Lee told reporters.

"The third launch is significant because it will be the first time we will be launching with our own clients, carrying eight satellites. We have always used other countries' launch vehicles, but we will finally launch Korean clients' satellites on a Korean-made launch vehicle. This is a very important moment, and I hope it will be a leap forward for Korea's space industry," the presi-

dent added.

Choi Sun-hak, director general of the Space Policy and Nuclear Energy Bureau of the Ministry of Science and ICT, said the launch will test whether Nuri can properly serve as a launch platform to put eight satellites into orbit.

"We began construction of the Naro Space Center 20 years ago. The idea of launching our own satellites and our own launch vehicle was only a dream, but the advancement of science and technology has made it possible. It was made possible by the hard work of policymakers, scientists and officials from the space industry," the director general said.

The third launch is scheduled for

6:24 p.m. on May 24. It may be 30 minutes earlier or later depending on weather conditions but the science ministry and KARI plan to stick to the scheduled launch time as much as possible. If the launch is not possible at the appointed time, the launch will be attempted again the following day during the launch reserve period between May 25 and May 31.

The main payload of the eight satellites is the next-generation small satellite developed by the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), KARI said. It will orbit 550 kilometers above the Earth and perform Earth observation with synthetic aperture radar (SAR) for two years.

"SAR is a technology that uses radio waves to recognize terrain features through signal, allowing for observations unaffected by light and clouds. Through the launch of the satellite, we will try to validate the technologies we have developed and obtain images of the Earth," Jang Tae-seong, an official from KAIST's Satellite Technology Research Center, said.

Hanwha Aerospace, which was chosen as a private partner to upgrade the Nuri space rocket, also participated in the launch for the first time. In the third launch, the company has served in managing production and co-operated in preparing for the launch with KARI.