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## Concerns rise over allowing foreign nationals to work at Korean space agency

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The government has sparked controversy over its plan to allow foreign nationals and dual nationality holders to work for the state-run space agency. The agency is Korea's version of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, otherwise known as NASA, and it is supposed to be established by the end of this year.

Given that most space projects are connected closely with the nation's core technologies including defense systems, concerns have been raised over the possibility of the government's move causing a threat to national security.

The Ministry of Science and ICT said Sunday that a proposed special law on the Korea Space and Aeronautics Administration's (KOSA) establishment and operation con-



President Yoon Suk Yeol announces Korea's plan to become a space economy powerhouse at JW Marriott Hotel Seoul, November 2022.

Yonhap

tains an exceptional clause enabling foreign or dual nationality employees to undertake tasks related to national security.

"KOSA will be able to hire foreign experts after screening them, even if the positions given to them are related to national security," Choi Won-

ho, head of the preparatory office for KOSA, told The Korea Times. "If a U.S. expert is necessary for a very difficult task, for example, KOSA will be allowed to hire the expert."

He added that KOSA will not allow foreign workers to become involved in tasks irrelevant to their respective duties.

According to Korea's State Public Officials Act, foreigners and dual nationality holders are allowed to work as civil servants, only if their jobs are not related to national defense, security and secret information.

In 2020, the state-run Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute canceled its plan to hire a Chinese national, who had passed the final interview.

Back then, Chinese citizens were able to apply for the position because the previous Moon Jae-in administration had prohibited state-run research institutes from asking their job applicants to disclose their nationalities, names, genders and schools before hiring them.

"We made the decision because a foreign national is not allowed to take part in projects related to national security," the institute said at the time.