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KOREAN AIR

Space agency to help create 500,000 jobs by 2045

Korea Aerospace Administration to be launched in May

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The Korea Aerospace Administration (KASA), which will open in May, will help create 500,000 jobs in the space industry and nurture more than 2,000 companies by 2045, according to Minister of Science and ICT Lee Jong-ho, Thursday.

Lee also said the ministry will take all possible steps to complete administrative work as soon as possible to launch the Korean version of NASA in order to catch up with other advanced countries' space

programs and become one of the world's top five space powers.

On Tuesday, the National Assembly passed a special act to establish KASA, nine months after a bill to establish the Korean version of NASA was submitted to the Assembly.

Based under the Ministry of Science and ICT, KASA will be responsible for the country's space development by being in charge of aerospace policies, fostering related industries and seeking international cooperation. Its headquarters will be located in Sacheon, South Gyeong-sang Province.

"We will grow dreams and hopes with the people through KASA, and we will enhance competitiveness with the industry, academia and research community to pioneer a

new future with the world," the minister said in a briefing at the Government Complex Seoul.

Lee emphasized that the establishment of KASA will serve as a new economic growth engine for Korea. "The establishment of KASA will be the start of a great step toward becoming a space powerhouse through the activation of the aerospace industry, which will provide a new growth engine for the stagnant Korean economy, as well as achieving the goal of landing on the moon by 2032 and exploring Mars by 2045, when Korea celebrates the 100th anniversary of its liberation (from Japanese colonial rule)," Lee said.

With the launch of KASA, the government plans to nurture more than 2,000 innovative aerospace

companies that will lead the national economy based on creative ideas and technological capabilities, and create about 500,000 quality jobs, the science ministry said.

The ministry added that it aims to have Korea account for 10 percent of the global aerospace market, which is scaled at 420 trillion won (\$320 billion), by significantly expanding the size of investments.

Immediately after the launch of KASA, the government plans to pursue joint projects with space research institutes in advanced countries, such as NASA of the U.S. and JAXA of Japan and economic cooperation projects with emerging countries where Korea has signed MOUs in the aerospace field, such as with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the ministry added.

EDITORIAL

Nascent space agency

Speed up efforts toward global space power

The National Assembly passed a special bill for the establishment of an independent aerospace agency. While overdue, the introduction of legislation for the new space organization is appreciated, as it is anticipated to fulfill a role akin to that of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The Assembly, criticized for a nine-month delay in addressing the bill submitted by the Yoon Suk Yeol administration in April last year, has finally taken action.

We hope the envisioned new agency will facilitate the nation's ascent to the status of a space power. With the bill set to take effect four months after promulgation, the establishment of the new agency is scheduled for May in Sacheon, South Gyeongsang Province. This agency will operate under the Ministry of Science and ICT, supervised by the nascent presidential space commission.

Korea has been viewed as an anomaly by the global community for being the sole G20 member without a dedicated space agency. The integration of esteemed research institutions like the Korea Aerospace Institute (KARI) and the Korea Astronomy & Space Science Institute (KASI) into the emerging agency signifies a strategic step. This alignment aims to enhance their capabilities for research and development while fostering increased international collaboration in space-related endeavors.

The new bill grants the agency greater flexibility and efficiency by exempting it from existing laws on government organizations. Notably, the agency is now empowered to recruit researchers from the civilian sector without being bound by the current 20 percent limit imposed by law. Additionally, the removal of the payment ceiling system provides the agency the freedom to attract high-quality talent by offering competitive salaries.

Following the successful third launch of the Korean-style Nuri rocket in May last year, Korea has now secured the technologies for satellites and projectiles, making it the seventh country in the world with such capabilities. Under the Yoon administration, a forward-looking space economy roadmap has been devised, outlining ambitious objectives such as a moon landing by 2032 and a Mars mission by 2045. While Korea forayed into space exploration later than some other countries, it is

catching up with 74 nations that currently operate independent space institutes, according to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA).

The establishment of the space agency has garnered significant attention and praise from the science and industry sectors. It is fair to assert that the nation's future prosperity is closely tied to the advancement of the aerospace industry. The expanding domain of space now extends beyond research and exploration to encompass defense, foreign affairs, and various other industries. As a result, the effective development of the aerospace sector plays a pivotal role in shaping the nation's overall trajectory in the evolving landscape of space-related activities.

Private space enterprises such as SpaceX are rushing to establish space internet networks while looking beyond the moon to explore Mars. Startups are actively preparing for missions aimed at both clearing space debris and achieving uncrewed lunar landings.

The aerospace technology sector, in its nascent stage, holds the potential for a profound ripple effect across various industries, marking it as a strategic player in the future Blue Ocean. To swiftly bridge the technology gap with advanced nations, concerted efforts are essential to firmly establish the fledgling space agency. Beyond the construction of its headquarters, emphasis should be placed on attracting relevant businesses, enhancing settlement conditions for enterprises and employees, and securing a pool of talented researchers. Active engagement from the government and the political sector is crucial to ensuring the smooth inauguration and operation of the agency.

Korea has a prime opportunity to leverage the establishment of the new agency to close the gap with nations at the forefront of the aerospace sector. Utilizing its competitive strengths in electronics, batteries, and artificial intelligence is crucial for this advancement. The government must adhere to its commitment to bolster the space development budget, increasing it to 1.5 trillion won (\$1.14 billion) by 2027 from the 2021 allocation of 730 billion won. Ensuring the independent operation of the agency, free from undue influence by the administration and political sector, is imperative for sustained success.