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Science minister picks Nuri launch as biggest feat

By Baek Byung-yeol
baekby@koreatimes.co.kr

One of the biggest achievements of the government in the field of science and technology over the past year, since President Yoon Suk Yeol took office in May 2022, comes from the space sector. In particular, the successful launches of the Nuri launch vehicle and the Danuri lunar orbiter, the minister of science and ICT said Wednesday.

"With the successful launch of the Nuri rocket in June last year and the transfer of launch vehicle technology to private companies, I believe the era of a private-led space economy has begun. Following the successful launch of Korea's first lunar orbiter, Danuri, into lunar orbit, we presented a blueprint for landing on Mars by 2045," Lee Jong-ho, minister of science and ICT, said in a press conference in the ministry's headquarters in Sejong.

"We are also in the process of launching the space agency, a dedicated space development organization, and concluded the Korea-U.S. space alliance. This shows Korea's space technology has expanded beyond just research and development to the area of industry and security," the minister said.

Giving his take on being in office for a year, he said his happiest moment was when Nuri was successfully launched.

"I became a minister in May last year and Nuri was launched in June.



Lee Jong-ho, minister of science and ICT, speaks during a press conference to mark his first anniversary in office at the ministry's headquarters in Sejong, Wednesday.

Courtesy of Ministry of Science and ICT

I was very worried that there would be a problem with the launch at a time when many people were struggling with COVID-19. When the launch was successful, I was so happy that I couldn't control myself," he said.

"Korea has become one of the world's top seven space powers," the minister said, emphasizing that the space achievements, including the successes of Nuri and Danuri, are among the achievements of the Yoon administration in science and tech-

nology over the past year.

The minister added that the government is also trying to strengthen its competitiveness in the emerging AI services market.

"In April, we prepared a plan to strengthen the technical and ethical capabilities of domestic hyper-scale AI, and started building a data center based on locally-developed high-performance and low-power AI semiconductors. We also started implementing a government digital platform utilizing domestic hyper-

scale AI in April," Lee said.

The minister added that the science and ICT ministry will continue to focus on coming up with sustainable policies.

"The job of the Ministry of Science and ICT is to prepare for the future of Korea. We must continue to be insightful and draw a sketch for the future of our country. We will create policies to make the country a safe and enjoyable place to work while advancing productivity," Lee said.

NK's 1st spy satellite launch likely be timed with key July anniv.

North Korea has announced the completion of preparations to mount its first military spy satellite on a rocket, but some experts predicted the North may launch it around a key anniversary in July to flex its military muscle with success.

The North's leader Kim Jong-un on Tuesday inspected the country's non-permanent committee designed to prepare for the launch of a military reconnaissance satellite and approved of its "future action plan," the North's official Korean Central News Agency reported Wednesday.

The secretive regime said the satellite is "ready for loading" on a rocket, after undergoing the final general assembly check and space environment test, stressing an "urgent requirement" to bolster its defense capabilities.

Kim's on-site inspection came about a month after he said the country completed building the satellite and ordered final preparations for the launch "as planned" during his visit to the state aerospace development agency in April.

The development of a military spy satellite is one of the high-tech weapons projects laid out at a key party congress in January 2021, along with a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile and a nuclear-powered submarine.

Experts said the spy satellite launch does not appear to be imminent, as Pyongyang may need "at least three or four weeks" for an actual launch, given the time needed for technical checks.

To put a satellite into an orbit, precise work should be carried out,

including the transportation of a payload to a launching pad and assembly jobs on a satellite and launch vehicle.

"The North may launch the satellite in early June or mid-June at the earliest date. But the country is more likely to calibrate the timing of the launch around Victory Day in July for its success after thorough preparations," Hong Min, a researcher at the state-run Korea Institute for National Unification, said.

North Korea will mark the 70th anniversary of Victory Day on July 27, the signing date of the armistice that halted the 1950-53 Korean War. The North calls the conflict the Great Fatherland Liberation War.

The North is likely to celebrate the upcoming anniversary with a possible military parade, in a bid to boost

its military capabilities, as the country has been focusing on expanding its arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Hong said North Korea has been ramping up satellite developments under the pretext of safeguarding its "sovereignty and self-defense," apparently competing against South Korea's push for satellite launches and trying to bolster deterrence against the United States. (Yonhap)