

# The Korea Times

\*\*\* CITY EDITION

Established 1950, NO. 22427

www.koreatimes.co.kr

FRIDAY-SUNDAY, AUGUST 18-20, 2023

Dongwha

www.dongwha.com



10-11 Weekender

Millennial seeks to bridge generation gap through social enterprise

Nationwide 24-hour reservation

1588-2001

Available in Flight  
KOREAN AIR

## Head of space agency preparatory office faces suitability questions

By Park Jae-hyuk  
jha@koreatimes.co.kr

Controversy is growing over the Ministry of Science and ICT's latest decision to give the position of the head of the Preparatory Office for the Korea Space and Aeronautics Administration (KSAA) to a government official, who specializes in the IT sector, rather than the space industry.

The ministry said Wednesday that Director-General Lee Jae-hyung would take charge of the preparatory office on Thursday.

Since he started his career as a government official, he has gained a certain amount of knowledge regarding technologies. He has handled policies related mainly to artificial intelligence and telecommunications, under the second vice science minister, who is in charge of ICT policy. He was deployed to the presidential office last year to assist the presidential secretary for science and technology.

Lee's predecessor, Choi Won-ho, who served as the first director-general of the preparatory office, had dealt with policies related to space projects, as he worked at bureaus on big science policies.

Some experts, therefore, raise speculation that the government may have hastened to appoint Lee, so as to solve the month-long leadership vacuum at the preparatory office, after Choi left last month when he was appointed as presidential secretary for science and technology.

Other candidates are rumored to have declined the job because the preparatory office head is expected to work in Sacheon, South Gyeongsang Province, once the KSAA is established in the southern city.

"It is uncertain whether the new preparatory office head will be able to enable the government to achieve its goal of establishing the KSAA by the end of this year," a professor of aerospace engineering said on condition of anonymity.

Amid the growing concerns, the science ministry explained that Lee supported the preparatory office while he was working at the presidential office.

"He is considered the right person to lead the preparatory office," a science ministry official said.

Lee Chang-jin, a professor at Konkuk University's Department of Aerospace Engineering, said the recent appointment could be intended as a way for the government to focus more on detailed administrative work, rather than on drawing up blueprints for its space policies.

After President Yoon Suk Yeol promised during his election campaign to establish the Korean version of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the government vowed last year to open the KSAA by the end of 2023.

However, as the opposition party objects to the planned organizational structure of the KSAA, the special law for its establishment is still pending in the National Assembly.