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Korean startup succeeds in test launch of space vehicle

Innospac, a South Korean space startup, said Tuesday its suborbital test launch vehicle, HANBIT-TLV, has made a successful flight, marking the country's first civilian-made space rocket.

The 8.4-ton thrust single stage hybrid rocket was fired from the Alcantara Space Center in northern Brazil at 2:52 p.m. Sunday (local time), or 2:52 a.m. Monday (Korean time), according to the company.

Its engine combusted for 106 seconds and flew for 4 minutes and 33 seconds before falling into Brazilian waters.

Although the engine combustion had been originally planned to last for 118 seconds, Innospac said the engine worked properly and maintained a steady thrust during the flight.

The company also said Brazil's inertial navigation system, called SISNAV, being carried onboard as a payload of HANBIT-TLV, functioned properly.

Innospac had attempted to launch HANBIT-TLV since December last year but had postponed it several times due to weather conditions and technical errors.

The HANBIT-TLV, the first civilian small satellite launcher in South Korea, is a test project to validate the first stage engine of HANBIT-Nano, a commercial rocket for small satellites capable of carrying a 50-kilogram payload.

Last year, Innospac signed an agreement with the Brazilian Department of Aerospace Science and Technology to launch SISNAV with HANBIT-TLV.

As it succeeded in test-firing HANBIT-TLV, Innospac said it became South Korea's first private launch service provider, analogous to the Space Exploration Technologies Corp., known as Space X in the United States.

Korean government has also led aerospace projects, including the most recent one that sent the 200-ton rocket Nuri into space in June 2022, carrying a 162.5-kilogram performance verification satellite.

"The success of HANBIT-TLV shows Innospac is capable of launching a space rocket and paves the way for us to tap into the global launch service market," Kim Soo-jong, CEO of Innospac, said in comments provided by the company. (Yonhap)



This photo provided by Innospac shows HANBIT-TLV blasting off from the Alcantara Space Center in northern Brazil, Sunday. Yonhap