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3rd Nuri rocket launch delayed by network failure

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

GOHEUNG — The third launch of a Nuri space launch vehicle, scheduled for Wednesday evening, was postponed because of network failures that occurred during the launch preparation process, the science ministry said only hours before the planned launch.

The ministry said engineers are trying to identify the exact cause of the network failure and fix the issue, and if the problem can be resolved by the next morning, it will hold a launch management committee meeting to decide whether the launch will take place later in the day.

"During preparations for the third Nuri launch today, a network error

occurred between the launch control computer and the launch pad facility control computer while controlling the low-temperature helium supply valve," Vice Minister of Science and ICT Oh Tae-seog said during a press briefing at the Naro Space Center in Goheung, South Jeolla Province.

The Nuri, the country's first locally developed rocket also known as the Korea Space Launch Vehicle-II, is this time loaded with eight practical satellites, each with their own missions in space. During the previous Nuri launch, the rocket carried a dummy satellite to test the vehicle's capabilities.

On Tuesday morning, the rocket was moved to the launch pad, and after being set up, it was connected to umbilical connectors and cables for fuel supply. On Wednesday, the

Ministry of Science and ICT and Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI), which supervises the launch of the space vehicle, found the abnormality at 3 p.m. while carrying out launch procedures.

"In order to ensure the third Nuri launch safely and successfully, we plan to hold a launch management committee meeting on Thursday morning to comprehensively review the situation and re-announce the launch schedule," the vice minister said.

The second Nuri launch was delayed twice in June 2022, due to weather conditions and issues with the launch vehicle. At that time, the rocket had to be taken off the launch pad and returned to its assembly building for inspection due to a problem with an on-board sensor.

Unlike the issues in the second launch, the problem this time was with a network system, not the hardware, so there was no need to take the Nuri off the launch pad, according to Ko Jeong-hwan, principal KARI researcher.

Ko added this problem was something that had not occurred during the first and second launches.

"We had rehearsed several times before this launch. However, there is always the possibility of a problem with many components, so the engineers in charge of many parts are always on standby. There are engineers working on it right now. Since the decision to cancel the launch was made, we have been working on finding the cause and fixing it," he said.