

The Korea Times

*** CITY EDITION

Established 1950, NO. 22272

www.koreatimes.co.kr

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2023

Dongwha

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3rd launch of Nuri space rocket planned in May

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Korea's Nuri, a space rocket developed by the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI), will be able to launch in early May, for the third time, the science ministry-affiliated research institute said Tuesday. The first launch in October 2021 failed but the second one in June last year succeeded.

A final preparation review will be conducted Wednesday, to get the go-ahead to launch the rocket, a process overseen by the Ministry of Science and ICT.

"A team of researchers will be formed in late March, and they will prepare for the launch of Nuri 3 without any complications," said KARI Vice President Lee Hwan-seok during a press conference in Seoul organized by the institute, Tuesday.

The sentiment is echoed by KARI head Lee Sang-ryool. The months-long internal rift over organizational restructuring at KARI should and will, he added, find a breakthrough in order to mobilize resources to better prepare for the third launch of Nuri.

"The restructuring is the right way to go," Lee said at the conference.

The comment is in direct reference to some senior KARI researchers who offered to resign after taking extreme offense at the restructuring.

They called it a "debilitating and insulting dismembering of a dignified organization central to elevating the country's scientific profile." Included is Ko Jeong-hwan, the head of KARI's launch vehicle department. The finance



Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI) President Lee Sang-ryool speaks during a press conference in Seoul, Tuesday. *Yonhap*

ministry said last December that the 243-strong department within the institute, which oversees the launch vehicle will be turned into one led by Ko left with five non-research officials.

"I had a one-on-one not only with Ko but the science ministry officials over the past week to keep the lines of communication open," Lee said.

"The task-and-goal-oriented new matrix structure is efficient and effective to more quickly handle a greater number of projects simultaneously, a streamlined structure embraced by many advanced science-leading countries."

Ko will be able to lead the team overseeing Nuri's launch with as many staff as he needs, Lee added, but returning to the previous organizational structure is out of the question.

"It is a closed matter. I hope the time and energy spent over the past few months on inflaming the structure issues would instead be put into a greater mission, which is the successful launch of Nuri in May," he added.