

S. Korea outlines space program

November 20 2007

South Korean space officials said Tuesday they plan to send an unmanned probe to the moon's orbit in 2020 and land a probe on the moon's surface in 2025.

The country's Ministry of Science and Technology also announced it will develop a large-sized rocket capable of carrying 300 tons of freight into space by 2017, and will begin construction on a space shuttle launching system in 2020, The Korea Times reported.

While South Korea has sent satellites into Earth's orbit during the past decade, all were ferried into space on foreign-launched rockets. During this time, the government has steadily increased its space budget for years with the Korea Aerospace Research Institute taking the leading role, the newspaper said.

KARI officials said the institute expects to complete construction of a space research center and a rocket launching pad next year.

KARI also is paying roughly \$21 million to Russia to send a South Korean astronaut to the International Space Station in April, hoping the event will increase public interest in the country's space exploration efforts.

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Citation: S. Korea outlines space program (2007, November 20) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-11-korea-outlines-space.html>

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