

South Korean rocket launch set for Jan 30

January 24 2013

South Korea confirmed Thursday that it will make another bid on January 30 to put a satellite in orbit and join an elite club of global space powers that includes China, Japan and India.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology said the much-anticipated launch—postponed twice last year—was scheduled to take place between 3:55pm and 7:30pm (0655 and 1030 GMT) next Wednesday.

Preparations by South Korean and Russian experts for the mission were going "smoothly" at the Naro Space Centre on the south coast, it said, adding the 140-tonne rocket would be moved to the [launch pad](#) on Monday.

The Korea [Space Launch](#) Vehicle-1 (KSLV-1) has a first stage manufactured by Russia, with a solid-fuel second stage built in South Korea.

Following failed attempts in 2009 and 2010 and the last-minute delays in October and November last year due to technical troubles, a successful launch is seen as crucial to South Korea's commercial space ambitions.

In 2009, the carrier achieved orbit, but faulty release mechanisms on its second stage prevented proper deployment of the satellite.

The 2010 effort saw the carrier explode two minutes into its flight, with both Russia and South Korea blaming each other.

Seoul's space ambitions were restricted for years by its main military ally the United States, which feared that a robust missile or rocket programme would accelerate a regional arms race, especially with nuclear-armed North Korea.

Japan and China both achieved their first satellite launches back in 1970, and India made its breakthrough in 1980. But the lack of US support contributed to South Korea, Asia's fourth largest economy, lagging behind.

The KSLV-1 will deploy a [small satellite](#) that will mainly collect data on [space radiation](#).

Last month, North Korea successfully launched its own long-range rocket, which Pyongyang insisted was a purely scientific mission to place a satellite in orbit.

Most of the world saw it as a disguised [ballistic missile](#) test that violated UN resolutions imposed after the North's nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009.

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