

Gov't Plan To Send First South Korean Into Space Likely To Be Delayed

South Korea's plan to send its first astronaut into space within the first half of 2007 is likely to be delayed following a rescheduling request by Russia, the Science Ministry said Friday, reports Asia Pulse.

It said Russian space authorities asked for the rescheduling after the United States requested that its astronaut be given precedence on the rocket passenger roster.

The U.S. astronaut is to replace a person manning the International Space Station (ISS) in April 2007, and under a previously signed pact, Russia must give preferential treatment to others in the joint project. The ISS is a joint effort by the United States, Canada, Japan, Russia, Brazil and 11 nations of the European Space Agency.

In September 2005, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun met his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow and signed an agreement to cooperate on space development, including a plan to put a South Korean into space by April 2007.

Regarding the delay, the ministry said a South Korean delegation will leave for Moscow on Sunday for talks with Russian officials to verify the U.S. request.

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