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Greetings from space



Top: A screenshot captured at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center shows Shenzhou XIII mission crew Zhai Zhigang (center), Wang Yaping (right) and Ye Guangfu greet people across China after they enter the Tianhe core module of the Tianong space station on Saturday. [XU BU / FOR CHINA DAILY](#)

Above: Screenshots show Shenzhou XIII crew inside the Tianzhou 3 cargo spacecraft on Sunday. [PHOTOS BY ZHAO YULIANG / XINHUA See stories, page 3](#)

Astronauts prepare for 6-month module sojourn

By ZHAO LEI
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Shenzhou XIII mission crew members have started to transfer supplies from the Tianzhou 2 and 3 robotic spaceships to the Tiangong space station, in preparation for their six-month stay inside the orbiting core module.

Mission commander Major General Zhai Zhigang, Senior Colonel Wang Yaping and Senior Colonel Ye Guangfu opened Tianzhou 3's hatch at 9:50 am on Sunday and then braced into the craft, the China Manned Space Agency said in a brief statement on Sunday morning.

The crew entered Tianzhou 2 on Sunday afternoon after a midday break, sources close to the mission said.

They checked the packages inside the cargo ships and moved some necessities to the core module, Tianhe, or Harmony of Heavens. The crew members also installed some crucial living devices inside Tianhe, according to the sources.

Feng Yong, project manager of Tianzhou 3 at the China Academy of Space Technology in Beijing, said the unmanned craft is carrying equipment required for a spacewalk, maintenance apparatus, spare parts, experimental material, emergency-response materials as well as necessities such as drinking water, compressed oxygen and hygiene kits. These supplies are enough for the

astronauts' six-month stay, he added.

In addition, the spacecraft has propellants to refuel Tianhe. It can also generate and supply electricity to the core module. Seeds to grow plants and vegetables are also inside Tianzhou 3 for mutation breeding experiments, according to the engineer.

The Shenzhou XIII spacecraft was lifted into space by a Long March 2F carrier rocket early on Saturday morning from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China's Gobi Desert. It is the fourth spacecraft to dock with the Tiangong station and the second crewed mission to the orbiting craft.

The mission crew entered Tianhe on Saturday morning, embarking on what is expected to become the country's longest spaceflight.

Before setting out for the flight, Zhai told China Central Television that he packed Chinese writing brushes, paper and an ink stone inside his luggage, hoping to practice Chinese calligraphy in his spare time. He also brought a lot of recordings of TV programs and music to enjoy during the stay, according to the State broadcaster.

Wang, the female member of the crew, told CCTV she plans to play a musical instrument and display articles that represent Chinese cultural elements during her video calls with members of the public.

China's longest-yet crewed space mission impressive, expert says

By CHINA DAILY

China's Shenzhou XIII crewed spaceship successfully docked with the port of the space station core module Tianhe on Saturday, a move overseas experts have called another "key step" forward in China's space exploration.

Three Chinese astronauts aboard the Shenzhou XIII will stay in orbit for six months, making China's longest-yet crewed mission for space station construction.

Denis Simon, executive director of the Center for Innovation Policy at Duke Law, told Xinhua that China's success in space continues to be impressive.

"It is now well on its way to being a leader in space exploration," he said.

With the current mission, China has taken another key step toward building a Chinese space station, he said.

Akihiro Fujiwara, a satellite engineer at Japan's Mitsubishi Electric extended his best wishes for the launch.

"I always take my hat off to this amazing 'driving force,'" Fujiwara said. "I pray for the safe launches and safe returns of the mission."

The crew includes two veterans of space travel — Zhai Zhigang, 55, and Wang Yaping, who is scheduled to become China's first female spacewalker. The third member, Ye Guangfu, 41, is making his first trip to space.

Many sent the Chinese astronauts their blessings.

Matthias Maurer, a German astronaut with the European Space Agency and a material scientist,

messaged in a tweet on Friday that he was "very excited for my dear friend Ye Guangfu finally going to space".

Maurer said that Ye was the first Chinese astronaut in an ESA astronaut exploration training program in extreme and planetary analogue environments.

"Godspeed to all three of you! — I'll join you soon in space," Maurer wrote.

Retired NASA astronaut Cady Coleman sent encouraging words to Wang, CGTN reported.

"When you look out the window, billions of women are looking out that window with you, including me," she said.

Pui Jeng Leong, a media veteran in Brunei, told Xinhua that the successive successful launches of Shenzhou XII and XIII within a four-month period symbolized that China's aerospace industry has entered a new age with Chinese astronauts' long-term stay in a space station, which once again demonstrates that China's aerospace technology has reached a leading level.

"This mission will continue to testify to the key technologies of space station building and lay a solid foundation for more launches of crewed spaceships and other space activities, he said.

"China's capabilities in space launch and exploration promise to grow in the future," US expert Simon noted, saying that "this could be an area for fertile cooperation".

Wang Xu in Tokyo, Chen Weihua in Brussels, Zhao Ruihan in Beijing and Xinhua contributed to this story.

Space station is well worth the cost

The three Chinese astronauts who are now on board Tianhe, the core module of Tiangong space station, will work and live there for about six months. This is the longest mission so far for Chinese astronauts.

The progress of China's manned space endeavors is evident. Eighteen years after sending its first astronaut into space, the country is building its own space station as a platform for humanity's exploration of space.

Living in space is not easy. It is very costly for a start. The International Space Station, which has been in operation for more than 20 years, has an annual maintenance cost of up to \$4 billion, and the average cost for each astronaut on board is about \$75 million per day. Are the costs worth it?

Yes, the value of the space station should not be underestimated as the microgravity conditions on the

space station can help yield experimental results that are impossible to get on the Earth.

The study of various physical and chemical processes in microgravity can lead to unprecedented discoveries in basic sciences. In the microgravity environment, new substances and materials can be tested. Cells in microgravity also grow differently in space, giving humanity deeper insights into some fundamental life science processes.

The space station also provides an ideal site to observe the Earth and monitor the effects of climate change, as well as the effects of space radiation and the electromagnetic field on the human body.

The vast universe is a treasure house for humans to explore. The space station provides a foothold for the scientific exploration of space. Exploring the universe is the common dream of humanity, and explor-

ing the unknown is the eternal driving force for the development of human civilization and scientific and technological progress.

The Chinese space station will become a testing ground for various innovative technologies, integrating high and new technological achievements in various fields, and at the same time putting forward new requirements for the development of various fields, and then promoting the improvement of the overall scientific and technological level.

Committed to promoting the peaceful use of space, and building a community of shared future for humankind, China will quickly build its learning curve on the building and operation of the space station to not only promote its own progress in science and technology but also that of humanity.

— ECONOMIC DAILY