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Space station crew's lecture on Thursday

Astronauts will talk to students from around the world and do experiments

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Crew members of China's Shenzhou XIII mission are scheduled to give a space-based lecture on Thursday afternoon from the orbiting Tiangong space station to students around the world, the China Manned Space Agency said on Monday.

It said the three astronauts — Major General Zhai Zhigang, Senior Colonel Wang Yaping and Senior Colonel Ye Guangfu — will open the first lecture of the Tiangong Class, or Heavenly Palace Class, at 3:40 pm Thursday, which will be broadcast live to audiences around the globe.

They will show viewers how they live and work inside the space station and will then carry out experiments to display interesting physical phenomena in space such as "disappearing buoyancy" and a "water ball". They will also answer viewers' questions at the end of the livestreamed event, the agency said.

The activity is intended to spread knowledge about manned spaceflights and spark enthusiasm for science among young people. The astronauts "sincerely invite young viewers to conduct similar experiments along with them to observe the physical disparities between space and land environments to experience the fun of exploration", the agency said.

Groups of invited students in Beijing, Nanjing, the capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Wenchuan in Sichuan prov-

ince, and Hong Kong and Macao will take part in video chats during the lecture, it said.

The agency said last week that the lecture "will mark the launch of the Tiangong Class, China's first extraterrestrial lecture series to popularize space science". It added that such lectures will be based on the country's manned spaceflights and will be presented by Chinese astronauts, featuring interactive teaching, the activities will be mainly targeted at youngsters.

The Shenzhou XIII mission was launched on Oct 16 by a Long March 2F carrier rocket that blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China's Gobi Desert, with the crew soon entering the Tiangong station. They are scheduled to spend six months working in the station, making it China's longest manned space mission.

The agency said that as a national space-based laboratory, Tiangong is also tasked with promoting and propagating science and technology knowledge. The orbiting outpost has abundant, unique educational resources and boasts advantages when it comes to encouraging the public, especially young people, to embrace science and space exploration, it said.

Thursday's event will be the second time Wang has engaged in a space lecture. During the Shenzhou X mission in June 2013, she carried out the nation's first space-based lecture inside an experimental space station module to more than 60 million Chinese students.