

## Flowering art

Practitioner carries on tradition deeply rooted in Chinese culture [LIFE, PAGE 10](#)

Central SOEs to up spending on manufacturing [BUSINESS, PAGE 5](#)



## Changing focus

Post-quake aid efforts turn to housing homeless survivors [WORLD, PAGE 8](#)

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## Astronauts share feelings with public

Shenzhou XIV crew meet media, back from their six-month orbital journey

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The three astronauts of Shenzhou XIV mission, who played a key role in completing the Tiangong space station, shared their experiences and feelings with the public on Friday in the first news conference after their six-month orbital journey.

Speaking at the meeting with domestic reporters at the Astronaut Center of China in Beijing, mission commander Senior Colonel Chen Dong said that every day during their mission was full of work because they were tasked with preparing for and monitoring the arrival of the Wentian and Mengtian lab modules, making three spacewalks and conducting a science lecture for students.

Chen recalled the moment he and his teammates — Senior Colonel Liu Yang and Senior Colonel Cai Xuzhe — met their fellow astronauts in the Shenzhou XV flight inside the Tiangong station.

"We had paid a lot of attention to news about the Shenzhou XV mission and the crew several days before they set out. When their spacecraft actually launched, we were watching the live broadcast and we were so happy that we kept clapping our hands for a long time.

"In the hours before their spacecraft arrived at the station, we were supposed to have a sleep but none of us really went to bed because we were too excited to feel sleep. The moment I was about to open the hatch after their spacecraft connected with the space station, I saw them through the window and I waved my hand to welcome them to our home, and theirs," he said.

After the new crew — Major General Fei Junlong, who is the mission commander, as well as Senior Colonel Deng Qingming and Senior Colonel Zhang Lu — floated into the station, the two crews hugged and then took a

group selfie to the applause from ground controllers.

It was the first time that six Chinese were in a space station at the same time and the first in-orbit gathering of two Chinese crews.

"We gave thumbs up in the selfie to celebrate the first in-orbit gathering, to show our appreciation of our space home and also to pay respect to our great motherland," Chen said.

Liu, the first Chinese woman in space, said the Shenzhou XIV was her second spaceflight and she made a paper "lucky star" each day in the mission.

She said she often stared at China when the station flew over the country.

"I know that there are numerous females in our nation working hard to pursue their dreams with courage and determination," she said. "I wish that each of us could realize our aspirations and that we could become light to bring warmth to others."

Cai, who made his first spaceflight, recalled that eating the vegetables they grew in the space station brought a lot of happiness to the crew, though taking care of the plants was never easy.

Chen's crew was the third group to go to the Chinese station, one of the largest pieces of infrastructure ever deployed in Earth's orbit. The three were launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in the Gobi Desert on June 5 and arrived at Tiangong later that day.

According to the China Manned Space Agency, the Shenzhou XVI crew will leave for the Tiangong station in May to relieve the Shenzhou XV team while their counterparts in the Shenzhou XVII mission will fly to the massive orbiting outpost in October.

In addition, the Tianzhou 6 cargo spaceship will dock with Tiangong in May to transport necessities for the crew, as well as space suits, experimental payloads, spare parts and fuel.