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Shenzhou XV crew completes its second spacewalk

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The Shenzhou XV mission crew members recently carried out their second spacewalk, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

The agency said in a news release on Thursday afternoon that Major General Fei Junlong, the mission commander, and Senior Colonel Zhang Lu completed the spacewalk and returned to the Wentian lab module. The third crew member, Senior Colonel Deng Qingming, stayed inside the Tiangong space station to provide support, the news release said.

The agency did not give information about when the spacewalk took place or for how long, nor did it mention the specific tasks performed by the crew.

It was the 10th spacewalk conducted by Chinese astronauts.

Fei and Zhang conducted the Shenzhou XV mission's first spacewalk on Feb 9. During the seven-hour operation, they completed several tasks, including installing equipment on the space station's exterior.

Fei's team arrived at the space station on Nov 30. The astronauts are expected to stay aboard the



A screen shot from the Beijing Aerospace Control Center shows Fei Junlong, commander of the Shenzhou XV mission, getting out of the Tiangong space station before taking a spacewalk. XU BU / FOR CHINA DAILY

station until May, when the Shenzhou XVI crew is scheduled to take over.

As of Thursday afternoon, the three astronauts had lived inside the space station for 92 days.

The Shenzhou XV crew is tasked with carrying out several spacewalks to mount equipment outside the station, installing scientific experiment cabinets and conducting scientific experiments and technological demonstrations.

So far, the crew has assembled

several scientific experiment cabinets inside the Wentian and Mengtian lab modules and has supported several cargo orbital deployment maneuvers, according to the agency.

Meanwhile, multiple scientific projects have been proceeding smoothly inside Tiangong, it noted.

Given that the in-orbit assembly of the space station and equipment installation and testing work have basically been finished, astronauts of the Shenzhou XV and future

missions will spend most of their time on scientific and technological assignments, said Pang Zhihao, an expert on space exploration technology and a renowned writer on spaceflight.

"Some scientists, as part of the future crews, will soon fly to the Tiangong space station to conduct experiments and research," he said.

As one of the largest and most sophisticated space-based structures ever placed into the Earth's orbit, Tiangong now consists of the Tianhe core module, the Wentian and Mengtian lab modules, and the Shenzhou XV crew spacecraft and the Tianzhou 5 cargo ship.

China will send two groups of astronauts to work in the Tiangong station this year, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

The agency said the Shenzhou XVI team will leave for the Tiangong station in May, while their counterparts in the Shenzhou XVII mission will fly to the massive orbiting orbiter in October.

In addition, the Tianzhou 6 robotic 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.