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CHINA DAILY

香港版
HONG KONG
WEEKEND
EDITION

中國日報

March 19-20, 2022

www.chinadailyhk.com HK 1/0

Crew aboard Tiangong to give 2nd talk

Millions of primary and middle school students watched first open lecture

By ZHAO LEI
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

Crew members of China's Shenzhou XIII mission will give their second open lecture on Wednesday afternoon from the orbiting Tiangong space station to students around the globe, according to China Manned Space Agency.

The agency said in a statement on Friday that the lecture will start at 3:40 pm Wednesday and will be livestreamed worldwide by China Media Group. The astronauts will carry out four experiments to show physical phenomena in microgravity, including liquid crystallization and water surface tension. They will also show the audience scientific equipment inside the Tiangong station, the agency noted.

The Shenzhou XIII mission crew — Major General Zhai Zhigang, Senior Colonel Wang Yaping and Senior Colonel Ye Guangfu — conducted their first open lecture in December from the Tiangong station traveling in an orbit about 400 kilometers above the ground.

They showed viewers how they live and work inside the space station, which consists of a core module, a human-rating certified spacecraft and two robotic cargo spacecrafts.

The astronauts carried out experiments to display interesting physical phenomena in space such as "disappearing buoyancy" and a "water ball". Before the end of the livestreamed lecture, they answered questions from students.

Millions of primary and middle school students across China watched the 60-minute televised event hosted by China Manned Space Agency, the Ministry of Education and other government departments.

A total of 1,420 invited students in Beijing, Nanming in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Wenchuan in Sichuan province, and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions were present at "ground class venues" and took part in video chats with the crew members during the lecture.

It was the first lecture of the Tiangong (Heavenly Palace) Class series, China's first extraterrestrial lecture series that aims to popularize space science and inspire youngsters to pursue their "science and space dreams".

The manned space agency invited viewers to conduct similar experiments on the ground to observe the disparities between their own experiments and those made by astronauts in space.

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 have spent five months working in the station, and are scheduled to fly back to Earth in mid-April. Their journey is likely to become China's longest manned space mission.