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## Crew ready for launch of Shenzhou XV mission

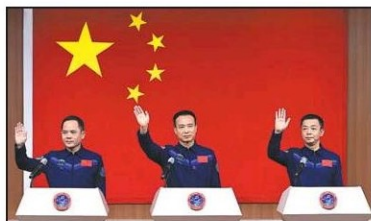
By ZHAO LEI  
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China will launch three astronauts in the Shenzhou XV mission to the country's space station on Tuesday night, a space program official announced on Monday.

Ji Qiming, assistant director of the China Manned Space Agency, said at a news conference at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China that the crew members — Major General Fei Junlong, Senior Colonel Deng Qingming and Senior Colonel Zhang Lu — are scheduled to be on board the Shenzhou XV spacecraft that will be lifted by a Long March 2F carrier rocket at 11:06 pm from the Jiuquan center in the barren Gobi Desert.

The Long March 2F rocket started being filled with propellants at the service tower on Monday morning.

After the Shenzhou XV spacecraft enters orbit, it will activate the rapid rendezvous-docking mode to approach and connect with the Tianhe core module, according to the official.



Members of the Shenzhou XV space mission — Fei Junlong (center), Deng Qingming (right) and Zhang Lu — meet the media on Monday during a news conference at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Northwest China. WANG JIANGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

The Shenzhou XV crew will stay inside the Tiangong space station for six months and is scheduled to return to Earth in May. They will carry out three to four spacewalks during the mission to mount equipment outside the station, he said.

In addition to spacewalks, their major tasks also include unlocking, installing and testing 15 scientific cabinets, conducting more than 40 scientific experiments and technological demonstrations, and carrying out six cargo orbital deployment operations, Ji said.

Fei's team will make the first in-orbit handover with the three Shenzhou XIV crew members, who have been orbiting Earth for nearly six months.

Their arrival will mark the first time that as many as six Chinese people are traveling in space at the same

time. There have been at most three Chinese astronauts in space at a time.

The Shenzhou XIV astronauts are expected to return to a landing site in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region within a week of the Shenzhou XV crew's arrival, the official noted.

Senior Colonel Chen Dong, the Shenzhou XIV mission commander, now holds the record for the longest in-orbit time of Chinese astronaut after spending a total of 209 days in space on two space missions.

The crew of the Shenzhou XV mission, China's 10th manned spaceflight, will become the fourth group of visitors to the Tiangong station that has been traveling in a 400-kilometer low-Earth orbit since last April.

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## Astronaut's dream realized after 25 years

By ZHAO LEI  
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Senior Colonel Deng Qingming, 56, said that he never lost sight of his "space dream" while waiting, training and preparing for almost a quarter of a century to take part in a space mission.

Speaking with Chinese reporters at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China's Gobi Desert, Deng, the last serving member of China's first group of astronauts to take part in a spaceflight, said that he never doubted his choice or considered quitting.

Deng said that he had "quietly prepared" throughout his life for an opportunity to take part in a mission, adding, "I didn't allow myself to be unprepared in case

that, one day, I would be called up.

"When I was told that I had been chosen for the Shenzhou XV mission, I was pretty calm. What I was thinking about at that time was that I must cherish this opportunity and train harder to honor their trust and my commitment."

Deng said his gratitude goes to a lot of people, especially the scientists, engineers and other workers in China's space industry, because it had been those people who worked hard to send astronauts like him to space.

Deng's story has become a hit on Chinese social media as microbloggers posted media reports to salute the veteran astronaut, a founding member of the People's Liberation Army Astronaut Division.

After the news about Deng being

selected as a member of the Shenzhou XV crew was published on Monday morning, many microbloggers congratulated him and said they were very happy that he could eventually realize his dream.

A Sina Weibo user who goes by the name Yang Haocheng wrote: "I will definitely wait in front of the television to witness the realization of Deng's flight dream. My best wishes to Deng and his Shenzhou XV flight. Stories like Deng's have earned our highest respect and gratitude."

Another user, zuonizijia 3, wrote: "I was so moved to learn that Deng was finally selected. I clearly remember that I cried in front of my classmates several years ago when we watched Deng telling his story on a TV program."

### Shenzhou XV crew profiles

**Major General Fei Junlong, 57**, a native of Jiangsu province, is a founding member of the People's Liberation Army's Astronaut Division headquartered in Beijing. He is the commander of the Shenzhou XV mission.  
Fei joined the PLA Air Force in June 1982 and was selected in January 1998 as one of the nation's first astronauts.  
In October 2005, Fei performed his first space mission onboard the



Shenzhou VI spaceship with Nie Haisheng, fulfilling the country's first multiday crewed spaceflight. He was commander of the five-day mission.

**Senior Colonel Deng Qingming, 56**, a native of Jiangxi province, is one of the pioneering Chinese astronauts.  
He was admitted to the PLA Air Force in June 1984 and was a commanding officer of a fighter jet regiment before joining the PLA Astronaut Division in January 1998.



**Senior Colonel Zhang Lu, 46**, a native of Hunan province, is the last of the second generation of Chinese astronauts to take part in a spaceflight.  
Zhang joined the PLA Air Force in August 1996 and was an elite fighter jet pilot at a training base. He was selected as one of the seven second-generation astronauts in May 2010.



ZHAO LEI

## Mission: Manned lunar landing planned

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Over the past four months, two massive space lab modules were launched to become parts of Tiangong. The arrival in late October of the second lab module, Mengtian, the world's largest single-body spacecraft now in active service, marked the completion of the space station's in-orbit assembly.

Currently, the Tiangong station consists of the Tianhe core module, the Wentian and Mengtian lab mod-

ules, the Shenzhou XIV spacecraft and the recently docked Tianzhou 5 cargo ship.

With an overall weight of nearly 100 metric tons, Tiangong is one of the largest items of space-based infrastructure mankind has ever built and deployed in outer space. It is expected to operate in its low-Earth orbit for about 10 years and will be open to foreign astronauts in the near future, space officials have said.

Lin Xiqiang, deputy director of the space agency, said that in the near

future China will deploy a space telescope to fly alongside the Tiangong station. The telescope will conduct short-time docking with the station for resupply, maintenance and upgrading purposes, he said.

When responding to a question at Monday's news conference about China's timetable for a manned lunar landing, Ji said that scientists, engineers and program planners have made specific plans and have been working to research and develop required technologies.