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## Return of Shenzhou XIX crew delayed due to weather

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The return of the Shenzhou XIX crew from the Tiangong space station, originally set for Tuesday, has been postponed due to weather concerns, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

The agency said in a short news release on Tuesday afternoon that the decision was made in consideration of the unfavorable weather conditions at the Dongfeng Landing Site in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and is intended to ensure the

astronauts' health and safety as well as the mission's success.

The crew's return will be determined and take place in due course in the coming days, it noted.

The outgoing Shenzhou XIX astronauts — mission commander Senior Colonel Cai Xuzhe, Lieutenant Colonel Song Lingdong and Lieutenant Colonel Wang Haoze — were launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Inner Mongolia on Oct 30 and arrived at the Tiangong space station later that day.

After several days of handover work, Cai and his teammates, who

are the eighth crew to inhabit the Chinese space station, took over the massive outpost in early November from their peers in the Shenzhou XVIII mission.

As of Tuesday, they had spent 181 days in a low-Earth orbit about 400 kilometers above ground and have completed a lot of scientific and technological tasks as well as three spacewalks. Their successors — astronauts in the Shenzhou XX mission — arrived at the space station on Friday.

A space industry observer who wished not to be named said that the safety of astronauts is always the

most important factor when mission planners decide their landing date and that there are a lot of unpredictable elements in the astronauts' return journey.

"For instance, if the wind is too strong, the parachute of the reentry capsule will not be capable of resisting and will lead to deviation from the original trajectory. A sandstorm will also cause big problems for ground recovery personnel. Therefore, it is understandable and necessary to adjust the landing date to ensure the absolute safety of our crew members," he explained.

## Space place to found a community not a colony

The crew of Shenzhou XIX spacecraft transferred the keys of the Tiangong space station to the Shenzhou XX crew at a handover ceremony on Sunday. The Shenzhou XIX crew has now completed all planned tasks. The three astronauts are expected to take the Shenzhou XIX spacecraft and return to a planned landing site at the scheduled time.

That marks another step forward in China building its space station, which, after receiving different batches of Chinese astronauts over the past years, will welcome its first ever foreign astronaut in the near future.

In late February, China and Pakistan signed a cooperation agreement to select and train Pakistani astro-

naughts for future flight missions to the Tiangong space station, opening a new chapter in deepening cooperation in the manned space sector between the two countries. This is the first time China has signed such an agreement to train foreign astronauts to participate in its space station flight missions, a substantial breakthrough in China's international cooperation in major space programs.

Although the United States tries to peddle the "China threat" theory to smear the country's space exploration, the world sees a different picture. China is willing to deepen its cooperation and exchanges with other countries to advance space exploration and the peaceful use of outer space and to

make better use of space technology for the interests of all people around the world. It is Washington that sees space as a new arena for geopolitical games and a first-come-first-served virgin land that the US must colonize to meet its own narrow ends.

China's vision of lowering the "threshold" for developing countries to enter and explore space is also a manifestation of the country fulfilling its international obligations as a major spacefaring nation that is committed to building a community with a shared future for mankind. China remains open to cooperation with other countries, including the US, for the peaceful exploration of space.

— LU YANG, CHINA DAILY