



By: TA | AP Brief

China launches spacecraft with 1 of 3 astronauts set for yearlong stay



China launched the Shenzhou 23 spacecraft Sunday night with three astronauts heading to its space station, including one set to stay in space for a year.

The spacecraft blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China. The much-anticipated launch comes as China prepares for its first crewed **lunar landing by 2030**.

The astronauts on the mission are Zhu Yangzhu, the commander, Zhang Zhiyuan and Lai Ka-ying, also identified by Chinese authorities as Li Jiaying using the Mandarin transliteration of her name.

Lai, who was born and raised in Hong Kong and has a doctoral degree in computer forensics, is the first astronaut from the city on a space mission.

The crew is set to conduct dozens of science and application projects, state media said.

They are also expected to complete an in-orbit rotation with the crew of Shenzhou 21, who has been at the Tiangong space station for more than 200 days.

The astronaut's mission

One of the three astronauts on the Shenzhou 23 mission is scheduled to stay at the orbiting space station for a year in what would be among the world's longest single stays in space.

The astronaut's mission is to “explore human adaptability and performance limits” in long-duration spaceflight environments, state media reported.

China's space station Tiangong, which translates to “Heavenly Palace,” first hosted the country's crew in 2021

astronauts have carried out multiple missions to the Tiangong space station, developed after China was effectively excluded from the International Space Station on U.S. concerns over national security.

The U.S. is seen as China's top space rival, with **NASA aiming to land astronauts** on the lunar surface in 2028.

China's space station Tiangong, which translates to “Heavenly Palace,” first hosted the country's crew in 2021. Last year, an emergency mission in the Shenzhou program, which means “Divine Vessel,” **returned a team of astronauts** stranded on the space station due to a damaged spacecraft.

As China steps up its space program, its