

## China Launches Shenzhou 23 Space Station Mission



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JIUQUAN, China – May 25 – China launched the Shenzhou 23 spacecraft Sunday night carrying three astronauts to its Tiangong space station, including one set for a year-long stay in orbit.

The spacecraft lifted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China, marking another step in the country’s human spaceflight program as it prepares for a crewed lunar landing

by 2030.

The crew consists of mission commander Zhu Yangzhu, Zhang Zhiyuan, and Lai Ka-ying, also identified by Chinese authorities as Li Jiaying using Mandarin transliteration.

Lai, born and raised in Hong Kong and holding a doctorate in computer forensics, becomes the first astronaut from the city to take part in a space mission.

The astronauts will conduct scientific and applied research aboard the station and are expected to carry out an in-orbit rotation with the Shenzhou 21 crew, who have been on Tiangong for more than 200 days.

One astronaut will remain in space for one year, in what is expected to be among the world's longest continuous human spaceflight missions. The mission aims to study human adaptability and performance limits during extended space exposure, according to state media.

China's Tiangong space station, meaning "Heavenly Palace," has hosted crews since 2021 and forms the backbone of its independent space program after exclusion from the International Space Station.

China's space ambitions continue to grow amid competition with the United States, which aims to return astronauts to the lunar surface in 2028.

