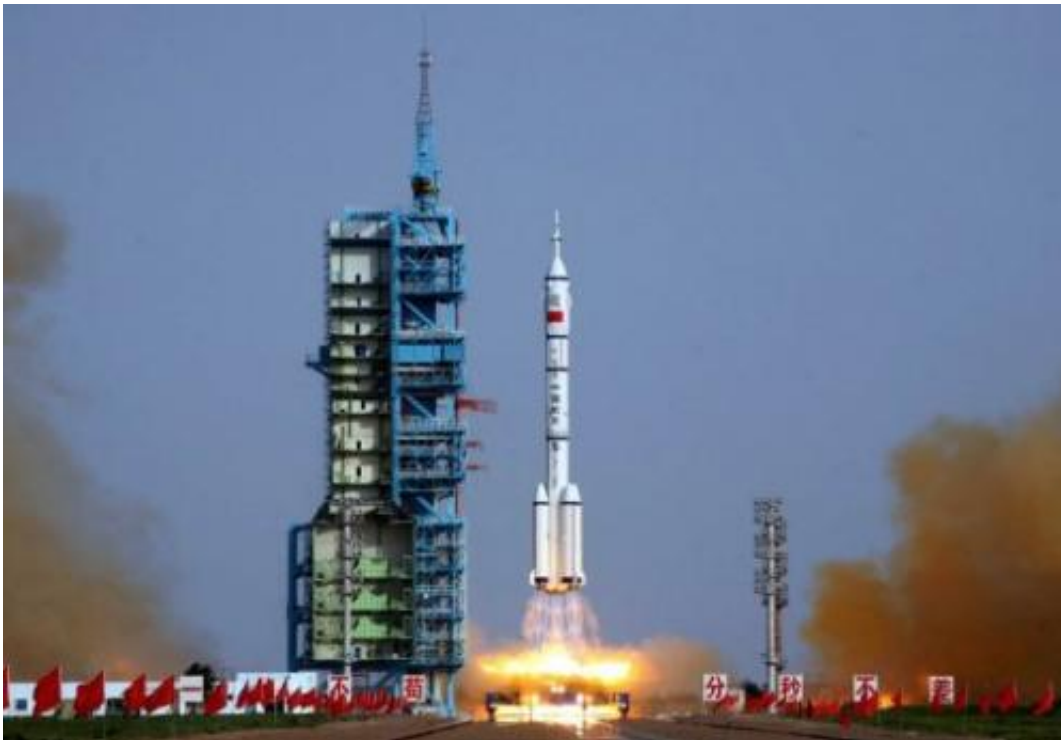


China to launch manned space mission in June

June 3 2013



A Shenzhou-9 rocket blasts off from the Jiuquan space base, northwest China's Gansu province in the remote Gobi desert on June 16, 2012. China will launch three astronauts into space this month to dock with an experimental space-module, state-media said, marking the latest step towards the country's aim of building a space station.

China will launch three astronauts into space this month to dock with an experimental space-module, state-media said Monday, marking the latest

step towards the country's aim of building a space station.

The Shenzhou-10 spacecraft has entered the "final stage of preparations," for a launch "in the middle of June," China's official [Xinhua news agency](#) said, citing a spokesperson for the country's [manned space program](#).

The craft will dock with the Tiangong-1 space-laboratory, Xinhua said, making the mission a crucial step on the way to China's goal of building a full space station capable of housing astronauts for extended periods.

Astronauts on board will "teach a lesson to a group of students via a video feed" while in orbit, after they launch from a base in northwest China, Xinhua said.

China's space capabilities lag behind those of the US and Russia, but it has [ambitious plans](#) for its space program, including plans to land a man on the moon and build a station orbiting earth by 2020, according to an official white paper.

China first sent a human into space in 2003. The 2012 Shenzhou-9 launch became China's longest-ever [space mission](#) and was notable for including the nation's first woman astronaut among its three-[member crew](#).

Beijing sees its multi-billion-dollar space programme as a symbol of its rising global stature, growing technical expertise, and the ruling Communist Party's success in turning around the fortunes of the once poverty-stricken nation.

The Asian superpower has been ramping up its manned activities as the United States, long the leader in the field, has scaled back some of its programmes, such as retiring its space shuttle fleet.

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