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Shenzhou XIII crew members Wang Yaping (left) and Ye Guangfu give a lecture to students on Thursday from China's space station. During the class, fellow astronaut Zhai Zhigang introduced the special uniform Ye was wearing, saying it is called a "penguin jumpsuit". The astronauts also talked about living and working conditions in the space station and conducted scientific experiments. The three Chinese astronauts Wang, Ye and Zhai went into space on Oct 16. ZHANG JUNJIA / XINHUA

Chinese astronauts give lecture from space

By ZHAO LEI in Beijing and WILLIAM XU in Hong Kong

Chinese astronauts conducted a science lecture 400 kilometers above Earth to millions of students on Thursday afternoon, as they orbited in the Tiangong space station.

Major General Zhai Zhigang, Senior Colonel Wang Yaping and Senior Colonel Ye Guangfu, all members of the Shenzhou XIII mission crew, greeted students, teachers and other participants when the lecture started at 3:54 pm. They showed viewers how they live and work inside the space station, which currently consists of a core module, a spacecraft and two robotic cargo spaceships.

The astronauts displayed their exercise equipment and a specially designed space suit, and conducted

demonstrations on physical phenomena in microgravity, such as "disappearing buoyancy" and a "water ball". Ye, who is on his first spaceflight, showed how he rotated his body in the weightless environment. The astronauts also answered questions from students during the lecture.

Tens of millions of primary and middle school students across China watched the hour-long televised event hosted by the China Manned Space Agency, the Ministry of Education and other government departments.

A total of 1,420 invited students in Beijing; Nanjing, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region; Wenchuan, Sichuan province; and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions were present at "ground class venues", with

some taking part in video chats with the crew members during the lecture.

It was the first lecture of the Tiangong Class, or Heavenly Palace Class, China's first extraterrestrial lecture series to popularize space science.

More lectures will be held based on the country's manned spaceflights and will also be presented by Chinese astronauts, the manned space agency said. Such activities are intended to spread knowledge about manned spaceflights and spark enthusiasm for science among young people, it added.

Shi Yi, deputy head of teaching and a physics teacher at the Beijing No 101 Middle School, said the space lecture was an eye-opening experience that would ignite students' interest in science.

Wang Yihan, a fifth-grade student

at the Yuxin School Attached to Capital Normal University, said: "The astronauts' experiments really intrigued and surprised me. I have great interest in spaceflight and would like to take part in our country's space exploration program in the future".

Vincent Wong Wai-shing, deputy principal of Hong Kong's Pui Kiu College, said after watching the lecture that the event gave Hong Kong students an opportunity to communicate with the astronauts while stimulating their interest in space and science.

"It also helped to enhance their sense of national identity as they saw the rapid development of our country's space technology," he said.

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