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香港版  
HONG KONG

# CHINA DAILY

中國日報

www.chinadailyhk.com HK \$10

THURSDAY, November 30, 2023

## Students enthralled by exchanges with experts

By WU KUNLING and LI BINGCUN in Hong Kong

Hong Kong students had the opportunity to satisfy their curiosity about space and the nation's aerospace development on Wednesday when they met with a high-level aerospace delegation from the Chinese mainland.

The delegation, comprising top taikonauts and engineers of the nation's manned space program, embarked on a four-day visit to the special administrative region on Tuesday. They engaged in three face-to-face dialogues with more than 1,200 students. The students — about 550 primary students and 600 secondary students — were representatives of 41 local schools.

The delegation comprises four astronauts who took part in the construction of the Chinese space station, as well as experts from related fields.

During the dialogues, the delegates discussed the nation's achievements in aerospace technologies, and shared their personal experiences and insights into space.

The eager students raised questions about the future of space explorations, the possibility of human habitation in space, and the role of artificial intelligence in aerospace development.

At Ma Tau Chung Government Primary School (Hung Hom Bay), Shenzhen XII astronaut Liu Boming was asked about astronauts' diets in outer space. He said that while rice serves as the major staple food, astronauts enjoy a diverse range of delicious dishes to meet their energy needs.

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Three members of the China Manned Space delegation exchange ideas with Hong Kong students during a dialogue session at Pui Kiu Middle School on Wednesday. They are (from left) Gan Keli, Mengnan's project manager at the Shanghai academy; Dong Nengli, assistant chief designer of the China Manned Space Program; and Shenzhou XIV mission commander Chen Dong. PHOTO / HKSAR GOVERNMENT



During a dialogue session with students at Pui Kiu Middle School on Wednesday in Hong Kong, Shenzhou XIV mission commander Chen Dong presents a picture of Hong Kong taken from space, calling it a "happy encounter". PHOTO / HKSAR GOVERNMENT

能在太空拍到香港也是件很幸福的事

## Dialogue: Visit boosts national pride among the young

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However, he expressed a longing for cuisine from his hometown, as the only vegetable available in space is dehydrated vegetables that can be rehydrated and eaten.

Lu also revealed that two candidates from Hong Kong and Macao have entered the final stage of the selection process for the country's fourth batch of astronauts and the recruitment of payload experts.

This is the first time that payload experts from the two SARs are in the running to be recruited. After the second round of selections in August, more than 20 candidates have advanced to the final stage of the process. The recruitment will choose 12 to 14 reserve astronauts.

At Hong Kong Baptist University Affiliated School Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School, Shenzhen XV astronaut Zhang Li spoke with students on the topic of loving the country.

Acknowledging the significance of the subject matter, one student said that Hong Kong is an integral part of the motherland, and throughout different eras, the motherland has supported Hong Kong's development. "As leaves of a mighty tree, we must always remember where our roots lie," the student said, garnering resounding applause from the audience.

### Astonishing life

Six other delegation members visited Pui Kiu Middle School in North Point. They included Lin Xiqiang, deputy director of the China Manned Space Agency and leader of the delegation, and Shenzhou

XIV astronaut Chen Dong.

The two-hour session was extended by half an hour to accommodate more questions from students.

During the session, Chen shared his experiences and discoveries from his time in orbit, as well as his daily work routine aboard the space station.

He discussed the physical challenges he faced upon returning to Earth, including pain in his calves and lumbar spine, and the rigorous nature of astronaut training. However, he was determined to persevere in the development of China's space program, and said he was inspired by Yang Liwei, China's first astronaut in space.

Chen also presented students with pictures of Hong Kong taken from space, which show the outlines of Hong Kong International Airport and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. In a footnote, he said: "It's truly fortunate to be able to capture Hong Kong from space."

A Secondary 1 student from the Chinese Foundation Secondary School said he was impressed by Chen's attention to detail in describing the daily lives of astronauts, such as the difficulty encountered in cutting their fingernails in space. The student said the interaction with the astronauts has ignited his passion to explore space.

Ng Wun-kit, principal of Pui Kiu Middle School, said that some science-minded students had expressed their excitement about the rapid development of technology.

He said the exchanges are expected to enhance students' understanding of aerospace engineering and help them foster a stronger sense of national identity.

Ng said the school plans to organize Wednesday activities to enlighten students about the development of national space engineering, including borrowing plant seeds that have been sent into space from the mainland for an exhibition at the school.

### Welcome gesture

Besides the educational activities, the delegation members and officials from the central and local governments attended a variety show at the Hong Kong Coliseum on Wednesday night as a welcome gesture to the delegation.

After watching the performance, 15-year-old student Huang Chung-yuen said he believes that the delegation's visit will facilitate exchanges between Hong Kong and the national agencies in the aerospace field, sparking greater interest in aerospace among the public.

Leung Kwok-fai, an educator in his 50s who attended the show, said that through the astronauts' sharing of their experience of the manned space program, students could gain a more intuitive understanding of the scale and strength of the country's space industry development.

A resident surnamed Qin, who brought her children to the show, expressed her desire for them to strengthen their understanding of the nation, take pride in its remarkable achievements, and learn from

the astronauts' spirit of exploring the unknown.

Another mother surnamed Rao enjoyed the performance with her son and said she expected her son to learn about the courage demonstrated by the astronauts and realize the tremendous efforts made by countless individuals for the development of the country.

The delegation also visited the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR on Wednesday. The office's director, Zheng Yanxiang, said that national space programs have provided a great platform for Hong Kong patriots to showcase their talents. He hopes the nation will make good use of Hong Kong's role to deepen international space cooperation in advanced technologies and attract talent.

During the visit, Lin of the China Manned Space Agency expressed gratitude for Hong Kong society's continuous support to the nation's space programs, pledging to join hands with local companies to elevate the space industry to new heights.

In the coming days, the delegation will officiate at the opening ceremony of the China Manned Space Exhibition at the Hong Kong Science Museum and meet with representatives of Hong Kong's innovation and technology sector. On Friday, the team will proceed to Macao for a two-day visit.

Andy Chong and Li Xiang contributed to this story.

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