

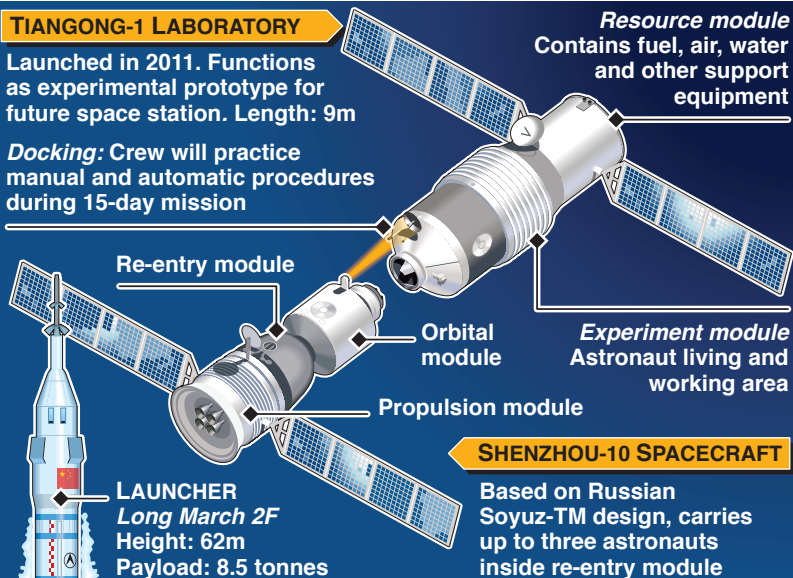
China embarks on longest space mission

China has embarked on its fifth and longest manned space mission, sending three astronauts to dock with an experimental laboratory in its latest step towards constructing a space station by 2020

TIANGONG-1 LABORATORY

Launched in 2011. Functions as experimental prototype for future space station. Length: 9m

Docking: Crew will practice manual and automatic procedures during 15-day mission



Resource module

Contains fuel, air, water and other support equipment

Re-entry module

Orbital module

Propulsion module

Experiment module
Astronaut living and working area

SHENZHOU-10 SPACECRAFT

Based on Russian Soyuz-TM design, carries up to three astronauts inside re-entry module

LAUNCHER

Long March 2F

Height: 62m

Payload: 8.5 tonnes



Nie Haisheng, 48
Mission commander

Fighter pilot in Chinese air force, first went into orbit as flight engineer during Shenzhou-6 mission in 2005



Wang Yaping, 33
Laboratory assistant

Former air force transport plane pilot becomes China's second female astronaut to fly into space



Zhang Xiaoguang, 47
Operator

Air force squadron commander selected to be astronaut in 1998. Flying first space mission on Shenzhou-10