

Chinese astronauts give science lesson from space station

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese astronauts last month beamed back a science lesson from the country's under-construction space station.

The lecture focused on physics, aiming to illustrate how the weightless environment affects buoyancy, the movement of objects, and optics.

Students from five cities, including Beijing and the semi-autonomous region of Hong Kong, peppered the astronauts with questions about living conditions in space and were treated to a virtual tour of the station. The event was also open to the public through a livestream.

Wang Yaping, the only woman aboard the station, served as the main instructor, while Ye Guangfu assisted and commander-in-chief Zhai Zhigang worked the camera. Wang had taught a similar lesson while aboard one of China's earlier experimental stations in 2013.

The three arrived at the station in October for a six-month stay, charged mainly with preparing the main Tianhe module for the arrival of two additional modules, named Mengtian and Wentian, ahead of completion by the end of next year.

Wang in November became the first Chinese woman to conduct a spacewalk when she and Zhai spent six hours outside the module installing equipment and carrying out tests alongside the station's robotic service arm.

The Shenzhou-13 mission is China's longest since it first put a human in space in 2003, becoming only the third country to do so after Russia and the U.S.

The three are the second crew on the permanent



OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD LESSON. In these images taken from video footage run by China's CCTV, astronaut Wang Yaping (far right in both images) and fellow Chinese astronaut Ye Guangfu are seen giving a science lesson to children across different parts of China through a video link from China's space station, which is orbiting Earth, on December 9, 2021. (CCTV via AP)

station, which upon completion will weigh about 66 tons, much smaller than the International Space Station, which launched its first module in 1998 and weighs around 450 tons.

Along with installing equipment in preparation for the station's expansion, the crew is assessing living conditions in the Tianhe module and conducting experiments in space medicine and other areas.

China's space program was barred from the International Space Station, mainly due to U.S. concerns over its intimate military connections.

China has also pushed ahead with un-crewed missions,



and its lunar exploration program generated media buzz when its Yutu 2 rover sent back pictures of what was described by some as a mystery hut, but was most likely only a rock of some sort.

The rover is the first to be placed on the little-explored far side of the moon, while China's Chang'e 5 probe a year ago returned lunar rocks to Earth for the first time since the 1970s. A Chinese rover, meanwhile, is searching for evidence of life on Mars.

The program has also drawn controversy. In October, China's Foreign Ministry brushed-off a report that China had tested a hypersonic missile two months earlier, saying it had merely tested whether a new spacecraft could be reused.

China is also reportedly developing a highly secretive space plane.

Hong Kong pro-democracy news site closes after raid, arrests

HONG KONG (AP) — A vocal pro-democracy website in Hong Kong was shut down after police raided its office and arrested seven current and former editors, board members, and a journalist in a continuing crackdown on dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

Stand News said in a statement that its website and social media are no longer being updated and will be taken down. It said all employees have been dismissed.

The outlet was one of the last remaining openly critical voices in Hong Kong following the shuttering of the *Apple Daily* newspaper, which closed after its publisher, Jimmy Lai, and top editors were arrested and its assets frozen.

Police raided Stand News' office after arresting six, including popular singer and activist Denise Ho, a former board member, on charges of conspiracy to publish a seditious publication.

They later also arrested a seventh person, a former *Apple Daily* editor who is married to the arrested former Stand News editor.

More than 200 officers were involved in the search, police said. They had a warrant to seize relevant journalistic materials under a national security law enacted in 2020.

The seven were arrested under a crime ordinance that dates from Hong Kong's days as a British colony before 1997, when it was returned to China. Those convicted could face up to two years in prison and a fine of up to 5,000 Hong Kong dollars

(\$640).

Police did not identify who was arrested, but Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post* newspaper reported they were one current and one former editor of Stand News, and four former board members including Ho and former lawmaker Margaret Ng.

A Facebook post on Ho's account confirmed that she was being arrested. A subsequent message posted on her behalf said she was OK and urged friends and supporters not to worry about her.

That post drew nearly 40,000 likes and 2,700 comments, mostly from supporters.

Stand News posted a video on Facebook of police officers at the home of a deputy editor, Ronson Chan. Chan, who is also chair of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, was taken away for questioning, the organization confirmed in a statement.

Chan, who was later released, told media the police seized his electronic devices, bank cards, and press card.

The arrests come as authorities crack down on dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese city. Hong Kong police previously raided the offices of the now-defunct *Apple Daily* newspaper, seizing boxes of materials and computer hard drives to assist in their investigation and freezing millions in assets that later forced the newspaper to cease operations.

Police charged the *Apple Daily*'s Lai, who is already jailed on other charges, with sedition.

"We are not targeting reporters, we are

not targeting the media, we just targeted national security offenses," said Li Kwai-wah, senior superintendent of the police National Security Department. "If you only report, I don't think this is a problem."

He said at a news conference that those arrested had to account for their actions even if they had resigned from Stand News.

Asked what advice he had for the media, Li replied, "Don't be biased. You know well how to report, how to be a responsible reporter, how to make a non-biased report to your readers. That's all I can give you."

Stand News earlier this year said it would suspend subscriptions and remove most opinion pieces and columns from its website due to the national security law. Six board members also resigned from the company.

The journalists' association urged the city's government to protect press freedom in accordance with Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law.

Defectors from North Korea pray for resettlement victims

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her husband and children still in North Korea. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, she has lost contact with them, and all the letters and packages she sent have been returned.

"My biggest worry now is their survival," Kawasaki said.

Kawasaki and other defectors want to rejuvenate a roughly 1 mile stretch called "Bodnam," or willow street, by planting new trees to replace those that have withered or died since the resettlement program ended in 1984. Older trees were planted to mark the 1959 launch of the resettlement program.

"The street has gotten shabby because people paid little attention to the resettlement program or they couldn't care less about it. I thought I had to change that," said Kawasaki.

Among her supporters is Harunori Kojima, 90, a former communist who once backed the resettlement program.

Kojima said he wanted to join the Bodnam street project because of a sense of guilt and regret that he long supported the program despite knowing the severe conditions in the North.

He saw the reality during a 1964 trip to North Korea but "could not tell the truth" to those associated with the pro-Pyongyang organization or to his Japanese communist comrades. "That

"The Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) is deeply concerned that the police have repeatedly arrested senior members of the media and searched the offices of news organizations containing large quantities of journalistic materials within a year," it said in a statement.

Benedict Rogers, co-founder and CEO of the non-governmental organization Hong Kong Watch, said the arrests are "nothing short of an all-out assault on the freedom of the press in Hong Kong."

"When a free press guaranteed by Hong Kong's Basic Law is labelled 'seditious,' it is a symbol of the speed at which this once great, open, international city has descended into little more than a police state," he said.

The arrests also followed the removal of sculptures and other artwork from university campuses in December. The works supported democracy and memorialized the victims of China's crackdown on democracy protesters at Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Defectors from North Korea pray for resettlement victims

matter is still tormenting my heart."

Kojima published a book in 2016 including photos he took of those who left for North Korea, newspaper clips endorsing the program, and letters he received from victims who yearned to return to Japan, as a way to document the history — and as atonement.

He noted the repatriation was strongly backed by Japan's government, Japanese media, and many nonprofit organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross.

A 2014 United Nations Commission of Inquiry report described the victims of the resettlement program as "forcibly disappeared" people whom North Korea kept under strict surveillance, deprived of liberty and freedom of movement. It said many were likely to be among the first victims of the 1990s famines due to their lower social status.

Kawasaki and several other defectors are seeking damages in a lawsuit against North Korean leader Kim Jong Un over human-rights violations they say they suffered under the resettlement program.

Kim is not expected to appear or compensate them even if the court orders it, but the plaintiffs hope the case can set a precedent for the Japanese government to negotiate with North Korea in the future on seeking the North's responsibility. A ruling is expected in March.

Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace



Open enrollment runs from
November 1 to January 15

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