Hong Kongâ??s first astronaut participates in Shenzhou-23 manned spaceflight mission

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HONG KONG SAR â??
Media OutReach Newswire
â?? 26 May 2026 â?? At 11.08pm on May 24, Dr Lai Ka-ying made history by becoming the first Hong Kong astronaut to blast off into space aboard the Shenzhou-23 manned spaceship. This momentous occasion also launched a new era for Hong Kongâ??s development of innovation and technology (I&T) as well as the cityâ??s participation in national development under Chinaâ??s 15th Five-Year Plan.

Congratulating Dr Lai on her achievement, John Lee, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), said that the HKSAR can â??transform from a â??supporterâ?? of the countryâ??s great aerospace endeavours into an â??executorâ?? â??.

â??This not only demonstrates the HKSARâ??s capability in contributing to the countryâ??s development into an aerospace power, but also showcases how Hong Kong could better integrate into and serve the overall national development,â?• Mr Lee said.

â??This mission is of great significance, as it is not only the first manned spaceflight mission during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, but also the first time for a payload expert from the HKSAR to participate in it.â?•

The Shenzhou-23 crew will conduct on-orbit rotation with the Shenzhou-21 crew. The crew, including Dr Lai, will stay in the space station and conduct multiple experiments and applications in various fields such as scientific applications.

The Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry of the HKSAR Government, Professor Sun Dong, led a delegation to the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center to witness this historic moment. Members of the delegation included other government representatives, I&T experts, youths and students.

â??I truly believe this is a great demonstration of Hong Kong integrating into and serving the overall national development through concrete actions, while contributing our strength in I&T,â?• Professor Sun said.

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â?• â??Science and technology is primary productive force, talent is primary resource, and innovation is primary driver of growth.â?? The HKSAR Government will continue to drive the development of I&T, accelerate the establishment of an international I&T centre, and make greater contributions to building our nation into a strong power in science, technology, and aerospace.â?•

Commissioner for Innovation and Technology of the HKSAR Government, Mr Ivan Lee, said that the Government had been providing funding support for universities and research institutions in conducting aerospace technology-related projects through the Innovation and Technology Fund.

â??In 2024, we launched a special call for funding applications, inviting universities to submit project proposals related to aerospace technology. Following a selection process, we supported six projects. Among them was the Multiâ??Spectral Imaging Carbon Observatory (MUSICO) developed by a team from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology,â?• he said.

On the Tiangong Space Station, Dr Lai will conduct experiments including operating the MUSICO â?? the worldâ??s first lightweight, high-resolution synergistic observatory for carbon dioxide and methane emission point sources.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, Dr Lai is a Superintendent of the Hong Kong Police Force. In the recruitment exercise of Chinaâ??s fourth batch of preparatory astronauts launched in 2022, she was successfully selected as a payload expert and was deployed to the China Astronaut Research and Training Center for training.

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Before embarking on the historic spaceflight, Dr Lai expressed hope that it would inspire more Hong Kong youths to devote themselves to the field of I&T, thereby contributing to the countryâ??s scientific and technological self-reliance and strength.

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