

China's 1st cargo spacecraft to make three rendezvous with Tiangong-2

China's first cargo spacecraft Tianzhou-1 is expected to dock with the orbiting Tiangong-2 space lab three times after its planned launch in April, sources said Saturday.

Tianzhou-1 will be sent into space from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in south China's Hainan Province aboard a Long March-7 Y2 carrier rocket, according to a spokesperson of China's manned space program.

It is scheduled to refuel Tiangong-2 three times and carry out experiments and tests.

During the journey, Tianzhou-1 will orbit on its own for about three months and together with Tiangong-2 for about two months after their rendezvous.

At the end of the mission, Tianzhou-1 will leave the orbit and fall back to earth while Tiangong-2 will remain in orbit and continue its experiments.

The Tianzhou-1 mission will complete the second phase of the country's manned space program.

It will be crucial for China in achieving the final step of establishing a space station around 2022.