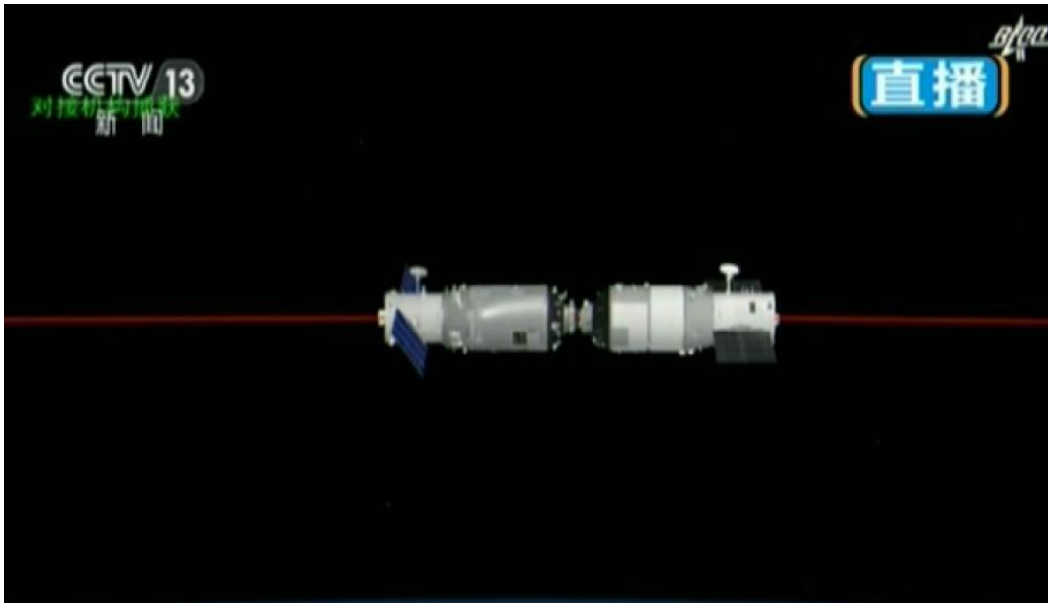


China's cargo spacecraft docks with space lab



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It is the first docking between the spacecraft and space lab.

Tianzhou-1, China's first cargo spacecraft, which was launched Thursday evening from Wenchang Space Launch Center in south China's Hainan Province, began to approach Tiangong-2 automatically at 10:02 a.m. Saturday and made contact with the space lab at 12:16 p.m.

The Tianzhou-1 cargo ship and Tiangong-2 space lab will have another two dockings.

The second docking will be conducted from a different direction, which aims to test the ability of the cargo ship to dock with a future space station from different directions.

In the third docking, Tianzhou-1 will use fast-docking technology. It normally takes about two days to dock, while fast docking will take only six hours.

Refueling will also be conducted, a process with 29 steps that takes several days.

Tiangong-2, which went into space on Sept. 15, 2016, is China's first space lab "in the strict sense" and a key step in building a permanent space station.

Cargo ships play a crucial role maintaining a space station and carrying supplies and fuel into orbit.