China to select 10 new astronauts this year

Chinese astronauts Yang Liwei (first from right) and Liu Yang (second from right) at an Aerospace Objects Exhibition at the National Museum of China in Beijing on April 24, 2017. [Photo/China Daily]

China will select the third batch of astronauts this year for its manned space exploration plan, according to Yang Liwei, deputy director of the China Manned Space Engineering Office and China's first astronaut to go into space.

"The new batch will have 10 to 12 astronauts, including around two females," Yang said on May 16 in an interview with China Youth Daily.

China has already completed the first two steps in the three-step process: sending manned spacecraft into space; carrying out extravehicular activities and docking moves and establishing space labs. The third step is to establish long-term manned space station.

After Tianzhou 1 cargo spacecraft docked with Tiangong II space lab, refueling and resupplying it in April, China completed the experiments and tests on the manned space lab missions, Yang said.

During the third step to build the space station, more scientific experiments will be carried out, requiring astronauts to have more expertise, Yang said.

"Astronauts in the first batch were required to have bachelor's degrees and

pilots' license. But now, new astronauts will focus on the engineering side. They should have master's degrees to work as engineers and researchers," Yang said.

New astronauts might face lower physical standards set for past astronauts in selection and training, but they should have more stable mental endurance, allowing them to work in a small place with heavy work for a long period, Yang said. The checks on chronic disease will be stricter.

"People who have suffered fractures have no chance. The appendicitis surgery might be tolerable, but any surgery on the chest is unacceptable. The nearsighted people also have no chance because the extreme pressure while entering the space will easily cause retinal detachment," Yang said.

Yang added that according to an initial plan, China might choose new astronauts every four years depending on the missions and training situations.

China will launch Long March 5B carrier rocket into space in 2019, and after that, the rocket will help carry the core module of China's space station into space. Shenzhou XII and Shenzhou XIII spacecrafts will be launched soon after that.

But the crew of Shenzhou XII will consist of astronauts from the first and second batches, Yang said.

China has selected astronauts in two batches, 14 in 1990s and seven in 2010.

IMD: China's world competitiveness is rising

A bird’s eye view of Beijing’s CBD. [Photo/China.org.cn]

The Chinese mainland’s world competitiveness rating has risen seven notches from last year’s 25th position to 18th this year, according to the latest yearbook issued by the Lausanne Institute for Management Development (IMD) in Switzerland.

The report uses four key indices, namely, economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency and infrastructure, in its evaluation.

With its outstanding economic performance index which ranked second among the economies surveyed, the Chinese mainland also outperformed other economies in scores for the domestic economy and employment, contributing much to its ranking improvement.

According to IMD’s analysis, the rise of Chinese competitiveness primarily attributes to deepened integration into global trade, which helped ameliorate its economic performance and government and business efficiency.

Among the 63 economies analyzed, China’s Hong Kong has continued as the the world’s most competitive region, while, Switzerland retained the runner-up spot from last time. Singapore overtook the United States to gain the third place, while the latter fell to the fourth.

According to Arturo Bris, director of the IMD World Competitiveness Center and Professor of Finance, the top economies are displaying a more open and business-friendly environment as competitiveness is heavily weighted by governmental and enterprise efficiency.

The decline by one place in American competitiveness indicates the economic uncertainties as the top executives contributing to the rating gave low marks

to its governmental and business efficiency, as a result of capricious politics and rising protectionism that weighed down the country's achievements in employment and inflation control.

Initiated in 1989, IMD's World Competitiveness Yearbook produces its annual ranking based on 260 indices, two-thirds of which are "hard" indices, including employment and trade statistics. The additional figures are based on the surveys of 6,250 top executives working for global conglomerates. The list incorporates 63 economies with the full score reaching 100 points.

FTC-2000 aircraft export-version rolls off production line

Photo taken on June 5, 2017 shows the FTC-2000 aircraft in Anshun, southwest China's Guizhou Province. [Photo/Xinhua]

The export version of the China-developed light versatile FTC-2000 aircraft rolled off the production line of the state-owned aircraft developer in Anshun in southwest China's Guizhou Province Monday.

With its desert-camouflage paint appearance, the FTC-2000 was developed by the Guizhou Aviation Industry Corporation under the state-owned Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC).

As one of the first batch of its model in the global-military trade market,

it will be delivered to overseas clients after necessary procedures and tests, according to AVIC.

The FTC-2000, also named Mountain Eagle, or Shanying in Chinese, is a supersonic advanced fighter trainer.

The single-engine light versatile aircraft is a new generation of advanced-fighter trainer designed for advanced training and lead-in fighter training for modern fighters. It is also capable of performing combat missions.

The supersonic aircraft has a mach number of 1.5, and a maximum service ceiling of 16,000 meters.

“It can be used for senior training, elementary combat training and tactical countermeasure training for fighter pilots. And it also has the ability to perform air-to-air and air-to-ground combat,” according to Hu Jianxing, deputy manager and chief designer with the AVIC Guizhou Aviation Industry Corporation.

“It completed the ‘Stall and Spin Flight Test’ within two seconds at the research stage. The FTC-2000 has high safety characteristics,” said Hu, adding the model was highly efficient and reliable.

The FTC-2000 maiden flight was on Dec. 13, 2003. And the model has made two public aerobatic flight displays, at the 2006 and 2016 China Airshow in Zhuhai.

In China, the FTC-2000 is the the main advanced trainer used by the PLA Air Force and the PLA Navy.

“The domestic version and export version have the same flying platform. And both are installed with China’s home-developed WP-13 turbojet engine, which has been tested for high performance,” Hu said. “The export version will be installed with various avionics systems, navigation guidance systems or external stores tailored for overseas client’s demand for multiple missions.”

CPC stresses internal supervision, inspection

The Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee has issued a circular on internal supervision and inspection.

The major task of the supervision and inspection is to ensure implementation of Party’s theory, line and policy as well as the CPC Central Committee’s decisions, according to the circular published on Monday.

Local Party committees should organize genuinely effective supervision and

inspection and ensure the thorough implementation of CPC Central Committee's decisions and policies, it said.

They should improve on-the-spot inspections and conduct investigations in private, the circular said.

The inspection results may be publicized on news media and leading officials of departments and work units where prominent problems are found will be given verbal warning.

Those who interfere in supervision and inspection will be punished, and supervisors and inspectors themselves will be held accountable for negligence of duty, according to the circular.

Three pandas return from Japan to China

Giant pandas Yang Bang and Hai Bang at the Adventure World amusement park in Shirahama, Wakayama prefecture, Japan, June 4, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

Three giant pandas born and raised in Japan arrived in Chengdu in southwest China on Monday night, where they will begin a new life, and, hopefully, have offspring.

The panda twins and their younger sister had been living at Adventure World in Shirahama, Wakayama Prefecture.

The male-female twins, called Hai Bang and Yang Bang, were born on August 11, 2010, while their younger sister You Bang was born on August 10, 2012. The names are translated from Japanese names to Chinese, said Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, their new home.

The three pandas will return to the base on Tuesday. They will undergo a month-long quarantine and orientation period before meeting the public.

“They are expected to adapt to changes in food, environment, language, and even the taste of bamboo. We will perform health checks on the pandas,” said Yang Zhi, a disease prevention expert with the base.

In 1994, the Chengdu base and the Japanese park started a panda breeding research program. Over the years, 15 pandas have been bred. Among them, eight have returned to China.

Cubs born to pandas that are “on loan” from China must be returned to China after they reach sexual maturity or when the cooperative agreement ends