

Chairman Mao Memorial Hall reopens to public



Visitors take photos after leaving the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall in Tian'anmen Square in Beijing on Sep 7, 2017. [Photo/China Daily]

A long line of people visited the memorial hall of Chairman Mao Zedong to commemorate the late Chinese leader on Friday, one day ahead of the 41st anniversary of his death.

At 8:30 am, about 300 people were waiting in the queue to enter the hall, which was reopened on Sept 1 following six months of renovation. The hall, located at Tian'anmen Square in Beijing, is open from 8 am to noon every day but Monday.

Because visitors are required to keep walking in a line and cannot stop in the hall, the line moved relatively quickly and visitors had a wait of only about 10 minutes before entering the hall.

Chen Hao, a student at Beijing Forestry University, came to visit the hall in April but found it closed for renovation.

The 23-year-old, who is pursuing a master's degree, returned on Friday after hearing the hall had reopened. "Chairman Mao has been an icon for me," he said.

Chen said he felt lucky to visit the chairman in person ahead of the 19th

National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which is scheduled to begin on Oct 18. He also brought his girlfriend with him this time.

Tenzin Gyalpo visited the hall for the first time with his mother. The 23-year-old from Qamdo prefecture in the Tibet autonomous region, said the hall is a sacred and spectacular place for him.

People laid so many flowers on a 2-meter-long table set in front of a sculpture of Mao near the hall entrance that workers had to place them on the floor every 30 minutes to make way for more.

The renovation of the 40,744-square-meter hall took 184 days and was finished on Aug 31, according to China Xinxing Construction & Development General Co, which won the bid for the project.

The work included electromechanical devices, some of the guards' rooms and the reception hall in the five-story building, according to company officials.

It was the third large-scale renovation of the hall in the past two decades, but the shortest one. The work in 1997 took nine months while the renovation in 2007 took seven.

The hall, which opened to the public on Sept 9, 1977, has received more than 200 million visitors from home and abroad, according to Chinese media reports.