

## CHINA DAILY

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## Your Guide to the Games

The athletes who will be the center of attraction at the Olympics, and where and when you can catch them, and the rest, in action



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## WELCOME, WORLD

## ▶ Seven-year wait comes to an end as Beijing embraces its biggest day

By OP RANA

There were cheers, and there was applause. The Olympic torch climbed the Great Wall yesterday, the last day of China's seven-year wait. The red Chinese national flag, with the five yellow stars, fluttered everywhere, welcoming one and all to the Olympic Games.

Beijing was awash in colors, giving it the look of a grand festival on the eve of the Games' opening ceremony. But this, as many people said, was once-in-a-lifetime festival. The sights and sounds were varied, carnival-like all the same, with restaurants and cabbies doing brisk business.

The capital airport saw its busiest day yesterday, handling more than 300 Olympic-related flights that carried VIP guests, athletes and sports officials.

More than 60 heads of state, or government, including US President George W. Bush, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, reached

the Games, including the Olympic lanes, were working fine.

The weather forecast for today was a bit of concern, however. The Beijing Meteorological Bureau forecast said Aug 8 would be cloudy with possibility of rain. But it did not specify when a shower could be expected.

At the Great Wall, a brief ceremony was held at the foot of the Badaling section before the first torch-

bearer and famous test pilot, Li Zhonghua, began his climb at 7:10 am. "If you fail to reach the Great Wall, you are not a man," he said, quoting Mao Zedong, after completing his stretch of about 50 m.

He was followed by 17 others who carried the torch on its 900-m stretch, 15-minute journey on the wall. After passing through two beacon towers, last runner Wang Ning climbed up to the Beisi Tower, and held aloft the sacred flame to the deafening applause of the crowd below.

From there, the torch traveled to the Temple of Earth on the penultimate day of its relay.

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- See more updates and coverage on [www.chinadaily.com.cn/Olympics/](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/Olympics/)

Beijing yesterday.

Back in the heart of the city, President Hu Jintao went through one of his busiest days, meeting with 11 foreign leaders in the Great Hall of the People. By Monday, he would have met with 70 leaders of different countries, Bush, Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda being among them.

Just outside the Great Hall of the People, the crowd was thin on Tian'anmen Square—perhaps because most of the tourists had opted for the Great Wall or the Olympic venues. The Forbidden City seemed to maintain its usual attraction, though.

Traffic was light on the roads, and the special arrangements for



Student Liu Fang (left) and Nokia's Colin Giles hold the Olympic torch high during its journey on the Badaling section of the Great Wall yesterday, a day before the start of the Beijing Games.

AFP

## Airport passes litmus test

By XIN DINGDING

Beijing airport was tested to its full yesterday, the eve of Olympic Games, and came out with flying colors.

The number of flights it handled was phenomenal: 1,300. But perhaps its greater test was handling more than 300 Olympic-related flights, which carried VIP guests, including heads of state.

Today will be another testing day, for more than 100 Games-related flights are scheduled to land at the airport.

Altogether, the airport is expected to receive 80 state leaders, and handle 160 chartered and 1,000 business flights during the Games.

Airport authorities yesterday said they had never received so many VIP aircraft and business jets in a single day. "Before this ... during the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation ... about 30 special flights and business jets landed in one day," said Chen Jingyun, general manager of Capital Airports Holding Company's VIP department.

But yesterday the airport received about 120 business jets and 19 special aircraft. It is a big challenge for airport workers just to recognize the different types of business jets, another company official said. "Many of the business jets have never been handled by us," said Liu Yue, a manager of the company's Beijing Aviation Ground Services.

To prevent any untoward incident and provide satisfactory service, the airport has drafted a 200-page service plan for the Games. That has enabled VIPs to leave the airport within 10 minutes of getting off a plane.

## Air is fine, let the Games begin

By Lei Lei



Jacques Rogge

International Olympic Committee president yesterday praised China for the "extraordinary" job it had done to clean the air for the Beijing Games.

China has done everything "humanly possible" to combat air pollution, and conditions will be fine for athletes, Jacques Rogge said.

"What they (China) have done is extraordinary: planting millions of trees between the Gobi

Desert and Beijing, removing hundreds of thousands of polluting cars, closing polluting petrol stations ... I think they have done a commendable job. The statistics are very clear. The pollution levels are coming down. It is not yet perfect. (But) it is safe for the athletes."

Rogge had a word of advice on the haze that shrouded Beijing a day before the start of the Olympics, too. There is a difference between the haze enveloping the city and damaging air

pollution, he said, rubbishing claims to the contrary.

What you see is the result of "humidity and heat", he said. It does not mean it "is the same as pollution".

After winning the right in 2001 to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, Beijing has made a lot of efforts to hold a "high-level Olympic Games with distinguishing features".

Rogge is highly satisfied with the preparations. "We have worked very hard with BOCOG for seven years ... Let me say that we are extremely eager for the Games to start."

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## Live in Beijing during Games

If you don't have a ticket to the Games, don't worry. The Beijing government has set up a network of "Olympic Live Sites", full of everything you could possibly want during the Games. **Page 25**



## Yao Ming to carry national flag

Basketball star Yao Ming will carry the national flag during the opening ceremony parade of the Beijing Olympic Games on Friday. **Page 37**



## First goal for China men's soccer team

**SHENYANG:** The Chinese men's soccer team scored its first goal in Olympic history yesterday. But it could still manage only a 1-1 draw against New Zealand. *China Daily*



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