

# Some bras banned for exams in China

BEIJING, CHINA: More than nine million students packed exam halls across China for the opening day of the country's university entrance exams --with attempts to stop cheating even leading to bans on metal bra clasps.



Female students are banned from wearing certain bras during national exams. (Image: Wiki Images)

Students in the north-eastern province of Jilin were banned from wearing clothing with metal parts and education authorities installed metal detectors in exam centres to clamp down on "wireless cheating devices", the state-run Global Times reported.

Authorities have become increasingly concerned about the risk of students using devices such as smartphones - some of which have become smaller and easier to hide - as an illicit aid during tests.

Around 9.12m high school students were registered across China to sit the crucially important two-day exam, known as the gaokao, an education ministry spokesman said.

Officials aimed to crack down on "sales of high-tech gear for cheating, and gaokao-related fraud", the Global Times said.

But users of China's Twitter-like weibos were scornful. "Everyone is paying attention to the bras. What about glasses?" said one.

## Extreme measures

Some measures to ensure students reach the annual test on time can be extreme. Pictures posted online showed an amphibious fire engine ploughing through water to deliver a boy dressed in school uniform to the exam in a remote part of Inner Mongolia.

The southern city of Guangzhou introduced dedicated lanes for vehicles taking students to the gaokao, local media said,

while parents in China's business hub of Shanghai booked taxis a week in advance for their children.

Alternatively, families rent rooms in nearby hotels to avoid wasting valuable study time commuting to exam halls, the website of the state-run People's Daily reported.

Some parents paid as much as 5,000 yuan (US\$815) a night for five-star accommodation in Shanghai, after facilities close to schools dubbing themselves "gaokao hotels" sold out of rooms, the report said.

Parents across the country visited temples to make offerings for their children's success, the Global Times said, while photos showed others waiting outside exam rooms with food and drink specially prepared for their children.

There are more than seven million university places available in China for the next academic year, so that most of those who take the test will secure one, but where they will go is hugely dependent on their results.

## **Excessive pressure on students**

In Beijing, Chinese, mathematics and English are compulsory subjects, with one other paper in either arts or sciences. The exam is scored out of a maximum 750 points.

China's top educational institutions such as Peking University or Tsinghua, also in the capital, can demand scores of around 600 or more.

China has faced severe criticism of its tests as observers say the test puts enormous pressure on students and is a symbol of educational inequality, as many low-income students whose parents have migrated to cities are barred from taking the exam in their new homes.

Top institutions also generally demand higher entry qualifications for applicants from other provinces.

Hu Qijun posted a message on Weibo that read: "They claim to aim for fairness, but enrolment, education and employment have turned so unfair we have entered an age where your fate is determined by who your father is. So what's the point of making one single exam fair?"

Questions can be bizarre. "If Thomas Edison returned to the 21st century, what would he think of cellphones?" one province asked this year, requiring an 800-character answer, according to the Sina web portal.

The central province of Hunan offered the single phrase "Walk past" as the topic for a writing composition, the report said.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge