

China's college English test adopts papers in Braille

Five blind students joined their peers Saturday to sit the national college English test in Changchun, capital of northeast China's Jilin Province, where test papers in Braille were used for the first time.



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The five students, from Changchun University's School of Special Education, were given test papers in Braille in a separate classroom away from other students. Their test lasted 195 minutes instead of the standard 130 minutes, as it takes longer to read and write in Braille.

In a classroom next door, three other visually impaired – but not totally blind – students were given large-font test papers and 169 minutes to answer with the help of magnifying lenses and reading lamps.

"All the visually impaired students were put in well-lit classrooms on the first floor and provided with power cords, bottled water and snacks," said Li Meng, an exam official with Changchun University.

Two teachers, one of whom knew Braille, stood by in case the students needed help, he said.

For Luo Qian, a senior student majoring in acupuncture and massage, Saturday's test was a dream come true.

"If I pass the test, I will be one step closer to graduate school," said Luo,

from central China's Hunan Province. She stayed up until after midnight revising for the test over the past few weeks.

Luo said she dreamed of becoming a teacher to help disabled children in her hometown earn their own living.

Luo wrote to education authorities in Jilin Province last September, asking for test papers in Braille to be made available for blind students, but her plea was unanswered and she failed to take the test last December as she hoped.

She repeated her request to Ministry of Education earlier this year and in May was told test papers in Braille would be available in the June test.

"This is the second major landmark for visually impaired students after test papers in Braille were used in the national college entrance exam in 2014," Luo said after the test.

That year, Li Jinsheng, a student from central China's Henan Province, became the first blind candidate to take the college entrance test. The move encouraged thousands of visually impaired students to study harder, enter higher education and live with dignity.

Changchun University's College for Special Education is one of China's largest higher education institutions for disabled young people. More than 370 of its students are visually impaired, according to Liu Haihan, a top college official.

The biannual College English Test, better known as the CET, is a national English as a foreign language test, which includes listening, reading and writing.

CET-4 or CET-6 is a requirement for university students.

Many universities will not allow a student to graduate without obtaining such a certificate, and it is often a prerequisite for those entering the job market.

Top political advisor stresses 1992 Consensus in cross-strait relations

Top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng has stressed adherence to the 1992 Consensus and opposing "Taiwan independence" as the key to ensuring the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.



Yu Zhengsheng (R), chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, shakes hands with Hung Hsiu-chu, chairperson of the Taiwan-based Kuomintang (KMT) party at the ongoing 9th Straits Forum in Xiamen of southeast China's Fujian Province, June 17, 2017. (Xinhua/Ma Zhancheng)

Yu, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks Saturday while meeting representatives of the attendees at the ongoing 9th Straits Forum.

The core of the 1992 Consensus is the one-China policy, which states that both the mainland and Taiwan belong to one and the same China. It explicitly sets out that the fundamental nature of relations across the Taiwan Strait are not state-to-state relations.

After clarifying this, many issues between the two sides could be solved through consultation, said Yu.

By refusing to endorse the 1992 Consensus, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration has undermined the political foundation of the peaceful development of cross-strait relations, said Yu.

Yu called on the DPP to clarify the nature of cross-strait relations and implement it through action. "It is an issue that cannot be avoided," said Yu.

Ninth cross-strait forum opens in Xiamen

The ninth Strait Forum started Saturday in east China's Fujian Province to boost grassroots exchange between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan.

During the week-long forum, 21 activities on youth exchange, grassroots communities and trade will be held, as well as 15 parallel activities across the province.

Topics of common concern for people across the Taiwan Strait, including cultural inheritance, employment, entrepreneurship, tourism, health care and vocational education will be covered in the discussions, according to the forum calendar.

The forum will also feature a group wedding for 50 cross-strait couples and a traditional martial arts competition.

This year marks the 30th anniversary since the two sides started people-to-people communication across the Strait.

Smart 'green cards' now available

A new ID card designed to give foreign permanent residents easier access to public services in China was issued across the country on Friday to expats holding "green cards".

The machine-readable Foreign Permanent Resident ID Card – similar to the second-generation ID cards held by Chinese citizens that store information about the card holder on an embedded chip – can be used independently as legal proof of identity when dealing with such issues as finance, education, health, communication, accommodations, telecommunication, employment, taxes, social security, property registration and lawsuits in China.

While the new card can be used by itself for such transactions, the previous permanent resident's permit needed to be used along with the holder's passport.

The change is a response to the long complaint from holders of "green cards" – as permanent resident cards are known – who said the card was more like a long-term visa rather than something that made their lives in China more convenient.

On Friday, the first group of foreigners, including 10 top-talent expats in

Shanghai, eight in Beijing and five in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, received the new cards issued by the Ministry of Public Security.

"I absolutely believe the new card will give foreign permanent residents more convenience to enjoy all the rights related to residency," said Anders Lindquist, a chair professor of automation at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and a permanent resident in China from Sweden. "It also renders us a stronger sense of belonging in China."

Fan Weishu, a 48-year-old Chinese-American who is a senior manager at an international insurance company in Beijing, said he was really excited to receive the card.

"I was born and raised in China, and today I felt that I'm back and I'm a real 'Beijinger'," he said.

Expats who obtain permanent residence in China as of Friday will be granted the new ID cards. Those who have an old permanent resident card can go to exit and entry administration bureaus of local public security agencies to replace their cards. The old cards are valid until the expiration date, according to the ministry.

Ghulam Sajid, who is from Pakistan and obtained permanent residence in China four years ago, said he planned to exchange the permit for the new smart card soon.

"Currently, I need to bring along my two thick passports together with the permanent resident permit to show my identity if I go to banks or purchase train tickets with manual service," said Sajid, a 43-year-old manager of an import and export company in Shanghai.

"With the new card, I'll be able to buy the train tickets on machines and get on a train by swiping the card like Chinese citizens," he said.

China began issuing permanent resident permits for foreigners in 2004. More than 10,000 foreigners have been granted the status so far.

[China's air quality worsens in May](#)



Cyclists in Tianjin wear masks on May 5, 2017, as dust hits the city. [File photo/Xinhua]

The air quality in China's major cities was worse in May than the same period last year, due to a sandstorm that swept across much of north China, the environment ministry said Friday.

Some 338 prefecture-level-and-above cities around China enjoyed good air quality for 70.5 percent of the month, down 12.4 percentage points from a year earlier, the Ministry of Environmental Protection said in a statement.

The average density of fine particulate matter PM2.5 in those cities stayed unchanged from last May at 38 micrograms per cubic meter, but the density of PM10 jumped 12.7 percent year on year to 89 micrograms per cubic meter, according to the ministry.

In early May, the country's northern areas witnessed the most severe sandstorm so far this year, which affected more than 10 provincial-level regions including Beijing, and covered an area of 1.63 million square kilometers.

Due to the sandstorm, 13 cities in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, saw the amount of days with good air quality drop by 23.5 percentage points to 39 percent in May. The density of PM2.5 and PM10 surged 14.9 percent and 59.4 percent, respectively, from a year ago, the ministry said.

The number of good air days in Beijing was down 12.9 percentage points to 48.4 percent last month.

A good air day is defined as an average daily Air Quality Index (AQI) of under 100 in Chinese air quality standards.

Haikou in south China's Hainan Province had the cleanest air of the country's 74 major cities, followed by Zhoushan/Lhasa, Xiamen, Lishui, Guiyang, Fuzhou, Taizhou/Zhuhai and Huizhou.

Tangshan in Hebei Province was the most polluted, followed by Handan, Shijiazhuang, Xingtai, Baoding, Zhengzhou, Tianjin, Hengshui, Xuzhou and Lanzhou.

China is addressing air pollution with stricter measures on emissions and an emphasis on clean energy.