

## Highlight News

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## **UN, Japan extend Rakhine cooperation to Kachin, Shan**



Japan and eight United Nations agencies on Tuesday signed a US\$37-million (K56.46 billion) agreement on humanitarian aid and development projects for Shan, Kachin and Rakhine states. The money will fund the delivery of life-saving assistance, protection, trust-building initiatives and early recovery support to people across the three states, according to a UN statement. The partnership includes a US\$20-million initial agreement that was signed in 2018 to help half a million people in Rakhine, the statement added. Japan and eight United Nations agencies on Tuesday signed a US\$37-million (K56.46 billion) agreement on humanitarian aid and development projects for Shan, Kachin and Rakhine states. The money will fund the delivery of life-saving assistance, protection, trust-building initiatives and early recovery support to people across the three states, according to a UN statement. The partnership includes a US\$20-million initial agreement that was signed in 2018 to help half a million people in Rakhine, the statement added. “I thank the government and people of Japan for their continued support to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs and long-term development prospects of Rakhine as well as Kachin and Shan states,” said Knut Ostby, UN resident and humanitarian coordinator. “The UN agencies signing today appreciate the continued confidence of our partners that enables us to add urgently needed support for humanitarian activities in Kachin and northern Shan states to the ongoing humanitarian and development initiatives in Rakhine State.” The agreements were signed by Japanese Ambassador Ichiro Maruyama, and representatives of the participating UN agencies. Receiving funding under the agreement will be the International Organization on Migration, UN-Habitat, UN Development Programme, UN Population Fund, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Children’s Fund, UN Women, and the World Food Programme. Half of the funding will support critical life-saving activities, including food assistance, shelter, water and sanitation, while the remaining funds will be support longer-term development initiatives to improve the living standards of all communities, including restoring livelihoods and building government capacity. The agreement will also support the government effort to create conditions conducive to the return of northern Rakhine refugees and support women leaders who advocate for equality and women’s empowerment. The projects will be implemented in the next 12 months starting in April, the statement said. Kimberley Phillips, public information officer of the UNHCR, said US\$5.47 million under the new funding agreement will be used to support the government’s efforts to address displacement and its causes in Rakhine. “We must be ambitious because the needs of people in these three states are great,” Ostby said. The Japanese Embassy said in a statement that ¥2.2 billion (US\$19.6 million) will be spent on responding to the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan. Projects for humanitarian and development assistance in Rakhine were worth ¥1.5 billion, it said. Also, ¥540 million will be spent on projects supporting settlements in Rakhine, such as the reconstruction of houses and small-scale community infrastructure for returnees and displaced people, the statement added.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/un-japan-extend-rakhine-cooperation-kachin-shan.html>

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## **Myanmar seeks higher export quotas to China for rice this year**



Myanmar and China have discussed raising the quota of rice that can be exported to China from Myanmar, says an official from the Myanmar Rice Federation. 400,000 tonnes of rice export to China market as legal quota, according to official. The talks took place during the Second China Myanmar Economic Corridor Forum held in Yunnan Province, China. The Myanmar delegation to the forum was led by Planning and Finance Minister U. The

countries mainly discussed cooperation on the Kyauk Phyu Special Economic Zone, Muse-Mandalay railway project, and agricultural exports to China. Separately, Myanmar and China discussed rice raising rice exports to China to 400,000 tonnes. In 2016, China permitted Myanmar to export 100,000 tonnes of rice and now Myanmar rice merchants are seeking to raise the quota by 300,000 tonnes. U Nay Lin Zin, joint secretary of the Myanmar Rice Federation, said China is supportive of exports of rice and broken rice in the border areas and will take action to legalise such border trade. Currently, Myanmar exports rice and broken rice to China through border trade, but the trade is not official and China's government levies import taxes strictly for rice from Myanmar. "Under the Belt and Road Initiative, China is trying to formalise trade with neighbouring countries. China should reduce import taxes if it wants to formalise trade. Doing so would only strengthen trade," said U Nay Lin Zin. During the talks, the Myanmar Rice Federation and some Chinese companies also discussed barter-trade system for the rice from Myanmar and commodities from China. Myanmar exported 1.7 million tonnes of rice and broken rice worth US\$ 578 million between April and December last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce. Around 52 percent was exported by sea, while the rest was sold at the border to China. At those levels, rice exports have decreased by over a third from 2.5 million tonnes worth US\$780 million in the same period the year before. The main reason for the recent fall in exports is lower demand from China. The Ministry of Commerce and Myanmar Rice Federation are now working on an action plan to increase rice exports. The plan includes improvements in production, quality, market information, and research, and connecting with new markets.

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-seeks-higher-export-quotas-china-rice-year.html>

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## **Airport in Chin state to open by September 2020**



Surbung Airport in Falam township, Chin State, the first major airport in the state, will open in September 2020, said U Ye Htut Aung, Deputy Director General of the Department of Civil Aviation. Construction of the K 30 billion airport, which began in 2016-17, had originally been scheduled for completion in 2021-22. Last month though, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint gave instructions for construction to be completed in 2020 and for the airport to begin operating in September. To complete the project within the deadline, more funds will be needed. "We currently have a budget of K5 billion a year. Another K10 billion will be needed to complete the project on time. We need to ask the ministry for the funds," U Ye Htut Aung said. So far, construction of the airport runways, terminals and facilities has taken place. An additional budget will be required for equipment, flight control systems, runway lights and so on, he said. The construction of the airport is being carried out across 1289 acres of land in Falam. The runway is expected to be about 2000 metres feet in length. There are nine townships in Chin State. However, it is hard for people to move within the state due to the lack of reliable transport infrastructure. In the monsoon season, for example, landslides and floods make it almost impossible for some people to travel. Meanwhile, those who need to travel interstate or internationally must find their way to Kalay in Sagaing Region, where the nearest airport is located. "As such, we are building an airport in Falam to make things easier for the people of Chin State," U Ye Htut Aung said. Importantly, the number of tourists visiting Chin State, which is home to Myanmar's heart-shape Rih Lake and Nat Ma Taung National Park, should also rise once the airport is complete. Notably, as many Chin people are Christians, more western visitors are expected to come. Despite its prospects for tourism, Chin State remains one of the least developed and poorest states in Myanmar due the lack of transport

and infrastructure. “When the construction of the airport is done, Chin State will be accessible from Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon within hours. As such, the tourism sector will develop faster,” said Salai Isaac Khen, former Chin State Development, Transportation and Tourism, Electricity and Industrial Minister. The regional government is also making plans to open smaller airports in Tiddim, Tonzang, Falam and Hakha townships. Meanwhile, a small airport in Matupi township with a 1000m runway, which was built with support from the UK, will be launched on March 6, he said.

Source: <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/airport-chin-state-open-september-2020.html>

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## **Businesses asked to relocate**



The Phnom Penh Municipal Hall has requested owners of factories, enterprises, warehouses and garages to relocate to the outskirts along the capital's third ring road, which is still under construction and expected to be completed by 2021. It said the facilities' locations in the city centre have frequently caused heavy traffic congestion and traffic accidents. In an announcement dated February 26, the city hall said numerous businesses have encroached on pavements and public streets, blocking traffics and subsequently causing accidents. It also said various enterprises and factories have exacerbated the problems by using heavy trucks to transport their goods in the capital during daytime despite repeated warnings, traffic law education and administrative actions by the city hall. The municipal authority suggested the businesses move to the Chinese-funded 48km ring road, which runs from the Prek Pnov Bridge in Prek Pnov district and snakes through national roads 3, 2 and 21 before connecting with National Road 1 at Km24+840. The road is 25m in width and has four lanes. Kong Ratanak, deputy director of the Road Safety Institute, said the proposed relocation will inevitably affect businesses. He urged the city hall and business owners to hold frequent discussions in a quest for a win-win solution. “Generally speaking, the impact would be inevitable, but I think the authorities have already assessed the potential impact on business owners.” “The long-term benefits [from the relocation] should be considered . . . it's better to move than to continue causing heavy congestion in the capital,” he said. In a separate directive posted on its official Facebook page on Tuesday, the city hall urged households, markets and other businesses including waste collection companies to properly manage waste disposal in the capital to avoid odour and messes. For businesses that produce solid waste such as brick, tile, concrete and sand, the directive bans arbitrary disposal at places not approved by the authorities. Enterprises that produce hazardous waste such as cloth, sponge, mud, rubber, glasses, ceramics and paint are prohibited from disposing the waste on both public and private compounds and instead required to dispose them at assigned industrial dump sites. Failure to comply with the directive will result in a fine of up to 200,000 riel (\$50) according to the government's waste management sub-decree – or a fine of up to five million riel and business closure if the waste is found to have an adverse impact on the environment in accordance with the law on “environment protection and natural resource management”. The fines would be tripled in case of repeated offences, the directive stated. Phnom Penh Municipal Hall spokesman Met Meas Pheakdey told The Post on Wednesday that the authorities would continue to raise public awareness.

“Law enforcement is what we should do as we already have the existing legal framework. But we also want them to be more aware of the issue. Most people do not understand as yet, so if we start to impose a fine, it will seem like we are doing it too hastily.”

Source: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/businesses-asked-relocate>

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## **Cambodia tots up tourism tally**



PHNOM PENH, 27 February 2019: Cambodia earned an estimated USD4.35 billion in 2018 from tourism, an increase of 19.8% when compared with USD3.63 billion in 2017, Tourism Minister Thong Khon reported on Monday. He was addressing a gathering in Phnom Penh to mark the country's seventh annual National Clean City Day. Quoted by the Xinhua news service he said: “We attracted more than 6.2 million foreign tourists in 2018, up 10.7% noting China was the biggest source market with nearly 2 million visits. Cambodia is forecasting 6.8 million foreign tourists this year and 7.5 million by 2020. Revenue should rise to around USD5 billion. Claiming around 1 million people rely on tourism for their income, the industry is poised to grow rapidly amassing as many as 15 million visitors by 2030 and revenue reaching USD10 billion. The country's economy grew by 7.5% and the poverty rate declined 10% last year. Tourism described as “green gold,” by Hun Sen the country's prime minister, is now one of the key sectors supporting the economy.

Source: <https://www.ttrweekly.com/site/2019/02/cambodia-tots-up-tourism-tally/>

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## **Laos, UN join forces to mitigate effects of climate change**



The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, United Nations Environment Climate Change Adaptation Unit and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) are collaborating to support the improved effectiveness and impact of climate change adaptation in Laos. Government officials and stakeholders gathered in Vientiane yesterday to attend a validation workshop on a draft project proposal for building the capacity of Laos to advance the National Adaptation Planning process. Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Dr Xaynakhone Inthavong, and Task Project Manager, UN Environment, Mr Alexander Forbes were co-chairs of the event. The proposed Global Environment Facility project will build on government priorities, policies and programmes on climate change adaption, and will help catalyse action towards their implementation. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of the government to integrate climate change adaptation priorities into national, sub-national and local planning, financing and monitoring, concentrating on the sectors most vulnerable to climate change. This will involve extending and deepening institutional and technical capacity, leading to better climate change knowledge systems to inform adaptation planning and to integrate climate change adaptation priorities into national development plans, sector policies and plans, public sector budgets, and private sector activities. Since September 2018, a consultant team has been working closely with the Climate Change Adaptation Division of the ministry's Climate Change Department and key stakeholders to prepare the full Global Environment Facility project document based on the original project concept endorsed by the GEF Council last month. The overall project objective is to strengthen the institutional and

technical capacity of stakeholders and the government to advance the National Adaptation Planning process, which will be achieved through the following four project outcomes. Firstly, the capacity of stakeholders to advance the National Adaptation Planning process will be strengthened at the national level and across the 18 provinces of Laos. Secondly, there will be a strengthened system for developing, upgrading and sharing climate information to advance this process. Thirdly, climate change adaptation is mainstreamed into socio-economic development planning in Laos in the medium- and long-term, and lastly, the capacity to monitor and review the National Adaptation Planning process in Laos is strengthened. The main elements of the project design and proposed components were presented at the validation workshop yesterday to key institutional stakeholders engaged in climate change adaptation science, policy, programming, monitoring and financing. The feedback from workshop participants will contribute towards the finalisation of the final project document and ensure that it takes into account the perspectives of key stakeholders.

Source : [http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContenten\\_Laos\\_UN\\_50.php](http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContenten_Laos_UN_50.php)

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### ***Water supply project built by Chinese firm completes in Lao capital***



VIENTIANE, Feb. 27 (Xinhua) -- A water supply project, built by the China North Industries Group Corporation Limited (NORINCO), has been completed and handed over to the owner in Lao capital Vientiane Wednesday. The handover ceremony for water pipe system extension project of Sandin Water Supply Plant and replacing of old water pipe for Nampapa Nakhnone Luang (Vientiane Water Supply Enterprise) is held at the outskirts of Vientiane, with attendance of Sinlavong Khoutphaythoune, member of the Political Bureau of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and mayor of Vientiane. Dong Jifeng, the assistant general manager of NORINCO International, the business sector of its parent company NORINCO, said at a ceremony on Wednesday, that the Vientiane municipal water supply project is an important strategic task related to the Lao people's livelihood. The NORINCO always adhered to the principle of "quality first" and the project was jointly supervised by a team of experts from the owner, the supervision company and the designer regarding quality, said Dong, adding their work has been fully recognized by the Lao side, Dong said. General Manager of Vientiane Water Supply Enterprise, Khampheuy Vongsakhamphoui addressed the ceremony that the project is an important livelihood project as a part of the company's development plan. Khampheuy said, after it is put into operation, the project will help achieve the target of the tap water coverage in Vientiane not less than 95 percent population by 2020, and will help Vientiane develop into a modernized city. The project, completed in 21 months, will supply 30,000 cubic meters of healthy and sanitary water per day to nearly 23,000 households in the Lao capital. Moreover, the project will install the water supply supervisory control and data acquisition system to help reduce the water leakage and improve the management efficiency.

Source : [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-02/27/c\\_137854632.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-02/27/c_137854632.htm)

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In Vietnam's in Chau Thanh district, there are more than 8,000 hectares of red-flesh dragon fruit growing area, including 2,000 hectares of high tech cultivation. There are about 150 dragon fruit collection units in the district, many of which initially belonged to Vietnamese merchants, but are now controlled by Chinese entrepreneurs. Vo Van Van from the Chau Thanh district's agriculture sub-department confirmed that after taking losses, the owners of some storehouses leased them to Chinese businesses for use. About 10 storehouses are large scale, with the area of 4,000-5,000 square meters for each. A local man said each storehouse is valued at VND2-2.5 billion a year. Nguyen Van Thanh, director of Van Thanh Dragon Fruit Cooperative, said some fruit companies had incurred huge losses of hundreds of billions of VND because of the 'price crisis': "Discouraged by unprofitable business, they (Vietnamese merchants) leased storehouses for money." According to english.vietnamnet.vn, the presence of Chinese businesses in Chau Thanh has led to a busier market, but experts have warned that Chinese businesses may join hands to control dragon fruit price. "Chinese businesses, who understand Vietnamese farmers, raise the collection price a little and then lower the price by several thousand dong per kilogram. Farmers then rush to sell dragon fruits for fear the prices will continue decreasing. And the businessmen can pocket the big money," explained Truong Huu An, director of Tam Vu Dragon Fruit Cooperative.

Source: [https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9076594/chinese-businesses-control-dragon-fruit-collection-units-in-](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9076594/chinese-businesses-control-dragon-fruit-collection-units-in-vietnam/)

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