

- 1 For the first time since records began, it was not a white Christmas in the city of Sapporo in Hokkaido where some ski resorts remain shut due to a severe shortage of snow.
- 2 The lack of snow can also be felt elsewhere in Japan - from Nagano, where fewer guests and a spate of hotel cancellations have forced operators to offer ski lift discounts, to Niigata, where about 60 per cent of its ski resorts have had to delay their opening, and Tottori, where none of its five ski resorts has been able to open. 5
- 3 Despite the cold snap, with violent gusts and heavy snowfall forecast for large parts of northern Japan over three days, the uncharacteristically warm winter has raised concerns about the impact of climate change on Japan.
- 4 The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) expects January to March to be warmer than usual following a warm autumn in 2019. This means that the iconic *sakura* or cherry blossoms may bloom early again this year, as they did last year when Tokyo saw a full bloom on March 27, a full week ahead of the average year. 10
- 5 Japan Meteorological Corporation, a private weather firm, said: "The flowering and full bloom dates are expected to be earlier than average years due to the higher temperatures forecast after February." Also, the annual average temperature for the country is expected to hit an all-time high since records began in 1898, in what the JMA has attributed to global warming. 15
- 6 Meanwhile, the term *yuki fusoku* (not enough snow) is trending on Twitter as concerns rise over the impact on tourism, though officials are hoping that the expected cold snap will bring some respite. 20
- 7 In Hokkaido, organisers of the annual Sapporo Snow Festival, where more than 100 snow statues and sculptures are showcased at Odori Park, have been struggling to amass enough snow. "I've never experienced a shortage of snow as serious as this," a Sapporo official told Jiji Press.
- 8 Hokkaido received just 50 per cent of the snowfall of an average year between December 1 and December 22, with mean temperatures of 2.8 degrees higher than in an average year, the JMA said. As of last Saturday, two of Sapporo's six ski resorts were still not open while three of the other four could offer only limited courses. 25
- 9 The start of the "penguin stroll" event at Asahiyama Zoo in the central Hokkaido city of Asahikawa was delayed due to low snowfall and barren asphalt roads. And a junior high school ski jump competition scheduled for this Saturday has been cancelled. 30
- 10 Over in Nagano, the local Shinano Mainichi Shimbun newspaper reported that the cumulative snowfall between November 1 and December 28 was only 3cm in Hakuba village, or just 2 per cent of the 131cm in a typical year. Only Karuizawa experienced more snowfall than usual.
- 11 Over in Tottori, Mr Shozo Myoga of the Wakasa Hyonosen Ski Resort told NHK: "There would have been nearly 1 meter of snow by now in an average year, but the warm winter this year has brought no snow at all. **This** is a heavy blow, and I hope for snow to fall as soon as possible." 35

Adapted from *The Straits Times* (January 2020)

<https://str.sg/JTEe>

Part 1: Vocabulary Matching (12 marks)

severe
spate
cold snap
forecast
gust
flowering
respite
showcased
stroll
barren
scheduled
typical

Dry and empty
Blossoming
Displayed
Planned
A short period of unusually cold weather
Very great or intense
A large number of the same occurrence within a short time
Predict or estimate
Ordinary or common
A short moment of relief
A leisurely walk
A strong rush of wind

Part 2: Reading Comprehension (10 marks)

1. From paragraph 1, why did ski resorts in Hokkaido remain closed?

\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

2. From paragraph 2, in which region did the ski resorts open up late?

\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

3. Which word in paragraph 4 means "very famous or popular"?

\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

4. From paragraph 5, what had caused the cherry blossoms to bloom early and how much earlier did they bloom?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)

5. Which word in paragraph 7 means "to collect something in large amount"?

\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

6. List down the events that had to be delayed or cancelled in paragraph 9.

i. \_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

ii. \_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

7. From paragraph 11, what does 'this' in line 36 refer to?

\_\_\_\_\_ (1 mark)

8. If you had booked a room at one of the ski resorts in Hokkaido, would you cancel your reservation, or would you still go? Give a reason for your answer. (HOTS)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 marks)

Score: / 22
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