

North Pole ice cap melting faster than ever

AFP, Washington

The Arctic ice cap keeps melting under the effects of global warming and in August saw its second largest summer shrinkage since satellite observations began 30 years ago, US scientists said.

Measurements on August 26 showed an ice cap of 5.26 million square kilometres, just below the 5.32 million square kilometres observed on 21 September 2005, making it the second biggest summer Arctic ice-cap melt in history, said the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC).

Since the start of August, the Boulder, Colorado-based center said, the Arctic polar cap shrank by 2.06 million square kilometres.

The melting is so fast and extensive it could shrink the ice cap to below the 4.25 million square kilometres reached in the summer of 2007, the smallest it has ever been observed by satellites, the center said.

Since the end of the Arctic summer and the start of the freezing autumn is several weeks away, it said, the ice cap could dwindle even more than it did in 2007.

At the end of northern hemisphere summer 2007, the Arctic ice cap was 40 percent smaller than the average 7.23 million square kilometres observed in 1979-2000, the NSIDC said.

The North Pole melting season begins in mid-June. The ice cap shrinks to its smallest area by mid-September and grows the most in winter by mid-March.

"The bottom line, however, is that the strong negative trend in summertime ice extent characterizing the past decade continues," the center said in a report.

The North Pole itself could even become free of ice by September for the first time in modern history, setting a new milestone in the effects of global warming on the Arctic ice shelf, NSIDC glaciologist Mark Serreze told AFP in late June.

"We could have no ice at the North Pole at the end of this summer. And the reason here is that the North Pole area right now is covered with very thin ice, and this ice we call 'first-year ice,' the ice that tends to melt out in the summer," he explained.

Serreze said the possibility the

ice cap could vanish stood at 50 percent.

If it does happen in September, he added, "it's possible that ships could sail from Alaska right to the North Pole."

The Arctic has been free of ice in the geologic history of the Earth, but never in modern history, Serreze said.

"Clearly, if you look over what we have seen in the past three years and where we were headed, we are in ... this long-term decline and we may have no ice at all in the Arctic Ocean in summer by 2030 or so," he added.

Not long ago, he said, the summer disappearance of the Arctic ice was predicted to happen between 2050 and 2100.

The NSIDC said the receding North Pole ice sheet was chiefly caused by the melting of ice in the Chukchi Sea, off the Alaskan coast, and the East Siberian Seas, off the coast of eastern Russia.

The Chukchi ice sheet is one of the natural habitats of the polar bear, where it hunts for seals, and its disappearance is a direct threat to the animal's survival.



Guests pose for photograph at the inaugural ceremony of Televideo Healthcare Service at a city hotel on Thursday. The service will enable people to consult with doctors through video round-the-clock.

Televideo healthcare service launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to reach healthcare service and health-related information to the doorstep of the people, Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital (JBFH) has initiated televideo healthcare service for all.

Televideo is a medium through which people can get 24-hour healthcare service by consulting with the doctors through video.

For this purpose, the JBFH has established a modern telehealth call centre on its premises where 75 doctors will be available round the clock to provide healthcare services.

The JBFH has been allocated two shortcodes (10600 and 10601 for farmers) from the BTRC and signed agreement with every operators and PSTN for telehealth services.

Agriculture and Water Resources Adviser Dr CS Karim inaugurated the televideo healthcare service for all at a programme at a city hotel on Thursday.

Chief adviser's Special Assistant for post and telecommunication ministry Brigadier General (ret'd) MA Malek, telecommunication Secretary Iqbal Mahmud, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Manzurul Alam, National Professor Dr MR Khan, Director of Channel i Shykh Seraj, and representatives of all the mobile phone operators and PSTN Chief Executive Officers were present on the occasion.

Citycell in association with the JBFH organised the inaugural programme with the support of Zoom EV-DO technology.

Initiatives have also been taken to install 500 video telehealth consultation booths in and around the city.

Two children drown in canal in C'nawabganj

UNB, Chapinawabganj

Two children drowned in a canal at Radhanagar in Shibganj yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Shihab, son of Babul, and Akash, son of Peshkar Ali. Both are two years old.

Villagers said the two boys slipped into the canal nearby their houses when they were playing on its bank at about 9:00am.

Later, local people recovered the bodies of the two children.

Japanese physicists aim to unlock universe's mysteries

AFP, TOKAI, Japan

As the world's scientists try to unzip mysteries about the universe, Japan is set to open its largest atomic science park to study the world at its smallest level.

The Japan Proton Accelerator Research Complex (J-PARC Centre) - a 150 billion yen (1.36 billion dollar) project almost entirely funded by the government -- will open in December as one of the world's three hubs of atomic science.

The gigantic complex in the nuclear research hub in Tokai, 100 kilometres northeast of Tokyo, is designed to help researchers study any object on Earth beneath the level of the atom.

By better understanding the world in such minute detail, researchers hope to bring benefits to a variety of fields including pharmaceuticals, food processing and ion batteries.

As far as research results are made public, researchers can use

these facilities for free," said Shoji Nagamiya, director of J-PARC Centre.

As many as 57 companies, largely in pharmaceuticals as well as universities and other institutes, are considering research at the science park, where up to 23 studies can take place simultaneously.

"Researchers will be able to study some lighter atoms that X-rays cannot analyse, most notably those of water," said Kunihiro Suzuki, chief spokesman at the PARC Centre.

"This means they could unzip the mechanism of any living organism -- whose main part consists of water -- and this will hopefully lead to further development of, for example, cosmetics and frozen food products," he said.

The research could also help in developing more advanced lithium ion batteries, Suzuki said. Such rechargeable batteries are widely used in electronics, but automakers are hoping to eventually use them to power eco-friendly cars.

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