

Global ice loss speeding up: study

28 trillion tonnes lost between 1994 and 2017

Ice is disappearing across the planet at an increasing rate, according to research which shows 28 trillion tonnes was lost between 1994 and 2017.

Scientists found that the rate of melting had accelerated from 0.8 trillion tons per year in the 1990s to 1.3 trillion tonnes by 2017.

The total lost over that period is the equivalent of a sheet of ice 100m thick covering the whole of the UK.

It has contributed as much as 3.5cm to global sea levels during that time, increasing the risk of flooding in coastal communities and threatening to wipe out precarious habitats.

The increase in ice loss has been triggered by global warming, with more than two-thirds of the total driven by rising atmospheric temperatures (0.26C per decade since the 1980s) and 32 percent by rising ocean temperatures (0.12C per decade).

'The residence has life again'

White House staff welcomes new first family

CNN ONLINE The new President and first lady settled in at the White House this weekend, and did so with extended Biden family members.

"The residence has life in it again," a White House source told CNN of the energy inside. "It's the honeymoon period where everything feels new."

There were nighttime movie binges in the White House movie theater, complete with snacks from the White House kitchen cooks, many of the Bidens' five older grandchildren piling into the seats to

a press release early Monday morning. Champ lived at the vice president's residence during the Biden's time there, and Major was adopted by the family in 2018 from a Delaware pet rescue.

Sunday saw a church-and-bagel run by the President, son Hunter and granddaughters Finnegan and Maisy. The narrow streets of Georgetown were clogged with motorcade vehicles while Hunter ran to grab bagels from Call Your Mother, a popular deli.

The choice of stop was tinged with a smear of swamp: one of Call Your Mother's owners and investors is Jeff Zients, Biden's Covid "czar." According to the Washingtonian, much of the recipe-testing for the deli's first location was done in Zients' kitchen.)

Biden's visit to a DC dining establishment on Day 5 of his presidency already ties him with the number of local restaurants former President Donald Trump visited. In his four years in Washington, Trump seldom ate out and when he did, only did so at one place -- the steakhouse at the Trump hotel.

Yet all of the new people in the White House residence meant more stringent Covid-19 precautions, a stark reminder of the pandemic amid a week of celebratory events.

"The family was good about it," said the White House source of adherence to mask-wearing and being socially distant from staffers.

"Every employee is masked especially when near the family," added a longtime residence staff member who said the Biden family does remove their masks once on the second floor of their private quarters.

watch, said another source familiar with the activities. The increased activity was met with pandemic precautions, including mask wearing.

On Sunday, the first dogs arrived from Delaware, where they had been waiting until things were unpacked and settled enough to allow a comfortable entry for the two German Shepherds at their new pad.

"Champ is enjoying his new dog bed by fireplace and Major loved running around the South Lawn," the White House said

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Greenpeace activists stage a protest by banners reading "2020 climate burdens - Parliament award Mohamed Laqhila, Jury award Emmanuel Macron, Government award Barbara Pompili" in front of French assembly's building Palais Bourbon in France yesterday, as they protest against the government's environmental policies.

Pfizer or Sinopharm?

'Vaccine diplomacy' in ME reflects China's growing regional influence

AFP, Jerusalem

Pfizer or Sinopharm? The US or China? In the Middle East and North Africa, novel coronavirus vaccine orders are driven by diplomatic and logistical considerations, reflecting Beijing's growing regional influence.

In recent days, the Israeli government made documents public that showed the extent of its collaboration with US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer in its vaccination campaign, one of the largest in the world to date, with more than a quarter of its nine million inhabitants already vaccinated.

In return for swift delivery, Israel -- with its vast digitised medical databases -- is giving the company data on the efficacy and potential side effects of the

vaccine based on indicators such as age and medical history.

This extensive cooperation is no surprise given Israel is Washington's main strategic ally in the region.

The Jewish state has also ordered millions of doses of the vaccine developed by fellow US firm Moderna, the least ordered vaccine in the region so far.

Other countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman, are also relying heavily on the Pfizer vaccine, developed by the US company in partnership with Germany's BioNTech.

Iraq, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, on the other hand, hedged their bets by ordering

from both Pfizer and Sinopharm, with the Chinese vaccine now deemed "completely safe" by the UAE.

For Yahia Zoubir, a specialist in relations between China and the Arab world, vaccine choice rests on considerations such as price and cold storage requirements -- -70 degrees Celsius for Pfizer (-94 Fahrenheit), but two to eight degrees Celsius for Sinopharm.

But politics are never far away, says the professor at Kedge Business School in France. Since the start of the pandemic, the administration of former US president Donald Trump "closed in on itself, while China has deployed health diplomacy", he told AFP.

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