

Massive Ice Shelf Breaks Free From Canada's Arctic

Associated Press

TORONTO—A giant ice shelf the size of 11,000 football fields has snapped free from Canada's Arctic, scientists said. The mass of ice broke clear 16 months ago from the coast of Ellesmere Island, about 497 miles from the North Pole, but no one was present to see it in Canada's remote north. Scientists using satellite images later noticed that it had become a newly formed ice island in just an hour and left a trail of icy boulders floating in its wake...In 10 years of working in the region he has never seen such a dramatic loss of sea ice...The collapse was so powerful that earthquake monitors 155 miles away picked up tremors from it...Using U.S. and Canadian satellite images, as well as data from seismic monitors, Copeland discovered that the ice shelf collapsed in the early afternoon of Aug. 13, 2005. [http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_story/0,3566,239737,00.html]

World faces hottest year ever, as El Nino combines with global warming

By Cahal Milmo

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A combination of global warming and the El Nino weather system is set to make 2007 the warmest year on record with far-reaching consequences for the planet, one of Britain's leading climate experts has warned. As the new year was ushered in with stormy conditions across the UK, the forecast for the next 12 months is of extreme global weather patterns which could bring drought to Indonesia and leave California under a deluge...Professor Jones said the long-term trend of global warming—already blamed for bringing drought to the Horn of Africa and melting the Arctic ice shelf—is set to be exacerbated by the arrival of El

Nino, the phenomenon caused by above-average sea temperatures in the Pacific. Combined, they are set to bring extreme conditions across the globe and make 2007 warmer than 1998, the hottest year on record. It is likely temperatures will also exceed 2006, which was declared in December the hottest in Britain since 1659 and the sixth warmest in global records...The warning of the escalating impact of global warming was echoed by Jim Hansen, the American scientist who, in 1988, was one of the first to warn of climate change...The demands came as the World Meteorological Organization...issued a warning that El Nino is already established over the tropical Pacific basin. It is set to bring extreme weather across a swath of the planet from the Americas and south-east Asia to the Horn of Africa for at least the first four months of 2007. [<http://news.independent.co.uk/environment/article2116873.ece>]

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‘If we fail to act, we will end up with a different planet’

By Steve Connor, Science Editor

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One of the world's leading experts on climate change has warned that the Earth is being turned into a "different planet" because of the continuing increase in man-made emissions of greenhouse gases. In an interview with The Independent, Jim Hansen, who was one of the first scientists to warn of climate change in scientific testimony to the US Congress in 1988, claimed that we have less than 10 years to begin to curb carbon dioxide emissions before global warming runs out of control and changes the landscape forever...Positive feedbacks in the high latitudes of the northern hemisphere are already starting. One is the loss of sea ice, which means less sunlight and heat is reflected back into space, making the Arctic even warmer. Another is the release of methane from the frozen tundra. Methane gas is 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas, Dr. Hansen said. "The greatest concern is that positive feedbacks at high latitudes do in fact seem to be coming into play. We can't just let those feedbacks get out of control or we will have passed a tipping point," he said... "If we follow business as usual, and we

don't get off this course where year by year we're getting larger and larger emissions of CO₂, then we'll have large sea-level rises this century and I think that will become more and more apparent over the next decade or two," Dr. Hansen said... "The last time it was 3C warmer, sea levels were 25 metres higher, plus or minus 10 metres. You'd not get that in one century, but you could get several metres in one century," he said. "Half the people in the world live within 15 miles of a coastline. A large fraction of the major cities are on coastlines. And the problem is that once you get the process started and well on the way, it's impossible to prevent it. That's why we need to address the issue before it gets out of control."... Dr. Hansen, who last year received the WWF Duke of Edinburgh Conservation Medal, said that although he is now free to speak out, many other US government scientists feel gagged. [<http://news.independent.co.uk/environment/article2116874.ece>]

Leading Article: The Battle to come

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The old argument over climate change is over. Few doubt any longer that our world is heating up, and that it is primarily a result of man-made carbon dioxide emissions. The evidence is now overpowering. Last year was the warmest on record in Britain. Globally, it was the sixth hottest. Even those who live in temperate climes can sense the planet is getting warmer...There has been another significant boost for those advocating swift action to curtail climate change. Sir Nicholas Stern's Treasury report two months ago has helped to discredit the argument that action to stop climate change will be prohibitively expensive. Thanks to his analysis, we now know that it will cost far more if we do nothing. **We are beginning to recognize the dire consequences of this warming of the earth. Rising sea levels, higher temperatures, drought, desertification, increasingly powerful storms and changes in rainfall patterns will make much of the planet uninhabitable within the lifetime of our children...**But despite this growing acceptance of the uncomfortable truth, little has been done about it..." [emphasis mine]

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