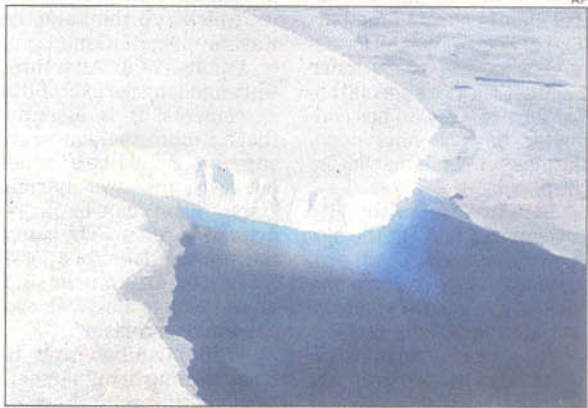


Antarctic ice melt unstoppable, sea level to rise by 1m

AP



A Nasa picture shows the Thwaites Glacier in West Antarctic, whose huge ice sheet has started a slow collapse in an unstoppable way

Oslo: Vast glaciers in West Antarctica seem to be locked in an irreversible thaw linked to global warming that may push up sea levels for centuries, scientists said on Monday. Six glaciers, eaten away from below by a warming of sea waters around the frozen continent, were flowing fast into the Amundsen Sea, according to the report which was based partly on satellite radar measurements from 1992 to 2011.

Evidence shows "a large sector of the West Antarctic icesheet has gone into a state of irreversible retreat", said lead author Eric Rignot of the University of California, Irvine, and Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California. The coastal ends of the glaciers rest on bedrock below sea level, holding back a vast weight of ice and making them vulnerable to melt, he said.

He likened the process to uncorking a full bottle of wine while it was lying on its side.

This part of Antarctica would be a major contributor to sea level rise in coming decades and centuries since the glaciers hold enough ice to raise sea levels by 1.2m.

"It's passed the point of no return," he told a telephone news conference.

Ice-penetrating radars showed no mountain ranges entombed under the ice, for instance, that could halt the flow. The fastest retreat was 34-37km over the period in

'Grave water crisis looms ahead'

By the end of this century, billions are likely to be gripped by water crisis. So say hydrologists who forecast that on present trends, fresh-water faces a double crunch — from a population explosion, which will drive up demand for food and energy, and the impact of climate change. Already today, around 768 million people do not have access to a safe, reliable source of water and 2.5 billion do not have decent sanitation. Jump forward in your imagination to mid-century, when the world's population of about 7.2 billion is expected to swell to around 9.6 billion. By then, global demand for water is likely to increase by a 55%, according to the UN World Water Development Report. AFP

the Smith/Kohler glacier.

Even so, cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, part of efforts to rein in global warming, could at least slow the slide of the Pine Island, Thwaites, Haynes, Pope, Smith and Kohler glaciers.

"We think this is related to climate warming," Rignot said.

The scientists believed that a build-up of man-made greenhouse gases in the atmosphere was affecting wind patterns around Antarctica, driving warmer waters towards the continent. REUTERS