

Massive iceberg breaks off Antarctica



ANTARCTICA: This undated handout picture received yesterday shows a "loose tooth" on the Amery Ice Shelf in eastern Antarctica. — AFP

WASHINGTON: A more than 600-square-mile iceberg broke off Antarctica in recent days, but the event is part of a normal cycle and is not related to climate change, scientists say. The iceberg, dubbed D28, broke away from the Amery ice shelf between Sept 24 and 25, according to

observations from European and American satellites. It measures 1,582 sq km, according to the European Copernicus program. It is about 210 m thick and contains 315 billion tonnes of ice, American glaciologist Helen Amanda Fricker said.

The figures are huge, but iceberg produc-

tion is part of the normal cycle of ice shelves, which are an extension of the ice cap, she said. "Ice shelves have to lose mass because they gain mass. They want to stay the same size," said Fricker, a professor at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California. The gain in mass comes from

snow falling on the continent and glaciers that move slowly toward the shore.

The east of Antarctica - where D28 broke off - is different from the west of the continent and Greenland, which are rapidly warming due to climate change. "It's really important that the public doesn't get con-

fused and think that this is climate change," Fricker said. An iceberg that was three times larger broke off Antarctica two years ago, she said, causing panic at the time. "It's a fine line because we definitely don't want people to think that climate change isn't happening," Fricker added. — AFP

Stolen golden coffin makes return from New York to Cairo

CAIRO: Looted amidst the tumult of Egypt's 2011 revolution, the golden coffin of priest Nefertiti was unveiled yesterday in Cairo after its return from New York. Standing at 1.8 m, the fine gilded sarcophagus has gained notoriety, apart from its historical value, for its role at the centre of an international trafficking ring. Dating back to the Ptolemaic period (1st-2nd century BC), the ornate wooden coffin was designed for Nefertiti, a high priest of the ram-headed god Heryshef.

The shimmering artifact adorned with gesso reliefs had been housed since 2017 in New York's Metropolitan Museum, which purchased it from a Paris art dealer for around \$3.5 million (\$3.8 million). But in February, a Met exhibition which named the high priest had to shut down after being informed the sarcophagus had been plundered by a multinational trafficking ring. It had been smuggled out of Minya in southern Egypt in 2011, the year that long-time autocrat Hosni Mubarak was toppled in a popular revolt. It had then made its way to the United Arab Emirates and Germany before landing up in France.

"I am very happy to have this piece back again in Egypt... We will know all the details about the theft later," Mostafa Waziri, secretary general of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, told reporters at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization unveiling. Egypt has sought to promote its archaeological heritage in a bid to revive its vital tourism sector, which took a battering from political turmoil after the revolution. — AFP



CAIRO: A picture taken yesterday shows the golden coffin of Nefertiti on display at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization following its repatriation from the US. — AFP

Iraqi police fire on protesters...

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And some carried portraits of Staff Lieutenant General Abdulwahab Al-Saadi, who was this week removed from his post in Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service in a shock move.

Riot police cleared the square a first time but the demonstrators regrouped and met a steady volley of live shots from security forces that continued even after the crowds had dispersed into adjacent neighborhoods. Three young men could be seen carrying a wounded demonstrator who was barefoot but wearing a checkered white-and-black scarf to protect him from tear gas fired by riot police, who also deployed water cannons.

Some protesters made their way towards Al-Jumhuriyah Bridge, which leads into the high-security Green Zone where government offices and foreign embassies are present. Police had set up metal barricades and stationed trucks at the mouth of the bridge to prevent protesters from crossing, and a security source inside the zone told AFP that reinforcements had been requested.

The gathering was the biggest demonstration against Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi since he came to power in late Oct 2018, just months after demonstrations that engulfed the southern city of Basra last summer. Despite simmering frustration with the premier over the past year, streets in Baghdad had remained relatively quiet before a confluence of factors apparently reignited public anger this week.

Graduates have slammed the government for failing to hire them in a country where a vast majority of the labor force is employed by a bloated public infrastructure. According to the World Bank, youth unemployment in Iraq is running at around 25 percent, double the national average. Abdel Mahdi has also taken flak over the decommissioning of Saadi, feted as a national hero for recapturing Iraqi territory from the Islamic State group.

Other protests in Nasiriyah and Najaf, south of Baghdad, saw hundreds gather in anger at poor services before also being dispersed by tear gas, AFP correspondents there said. Since 2004, a year after the US-led invasion that ousted dictator Saddam Hussein, almost \$450 billion of public funds has vanished into the pockets of shady politicians and businessmen, according to official figures. — AFP

UPS wins first US approval for 'drone airline'

WASHINGTON: Package delivery giant UPS said yesterday it became the first company to obtain US regulatory approval to operate a "drone airline" and would expand its airborne operations in healthcare and other sectors. UPS said it was the first applicant to win full certification from the Federal Aviation Administration, allowing it to fly an unlimited number of drones with an unlimited number of remote operators. "This is history in the making, and we aren't done yet," said David Abney, UPS chief executive.

"Our technology is opening doors for UPS and solving problems in unique ways for our customers. We will soon announce other steps to build out our infrastructure, expand services for healthcare customers and put drones to new uses in the future." UPS earlier this year partnered with the technology firm Matternet on delivery of medical products and specimens in North Carolina. "UPS is ready to build on this application and expand to a variety of critical-care or lifesaving applications," a company statement said.

Abney said the UPS Flight Forward unit "is building a full-scale drone operation based on the rigorous reli-



MENLO PARK, California: This March 13, 2019 image released by UPS shows a Matternet drone loaded with a UPS sample box. — AFP

ability, safety, and control requirements of the FAA." US Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao said, "This is a big step forward in safely integrating unmanned aircraft systems into our airspace, expanding access to healthcare in North Carolina and building on the success of the national (drone pilot program) to maintain American leadership in unmanned aviation." The news comes with a variety of companies ranging from new startups to major tech firms such as Amazon and Uber working on autonomous drone delivery. — AFP

Human emissions '100-times greater'...

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these events we've seen in Earth's past," Edmonds told AFP. Celina Suarez, Associate Professor of Geology at the University of Arkansas, said modern manmade emissions were the "same magnitude" as past carbon shocks that precipitated mass extinction. "We are on the same level of carbon catastrophe which is a bit sobering," she told AFP.

By comparison, the CO2 released annually by volcanoes

hovers around 0.3 and 0.4 gigatonnes - roughly 100 times less than manmade emissions. "Climate skeptics really jump on volcanoes as a possible contender for top CO2 emissions but it's simply not the case," said Edmonds. "It's also the timescale." Whereas Earth's atmosphere has frequently contained higher concentrations of CO2 than the present day, outside of catastrophic eruptions it has taken hundreds of thousands of years for such levels to accumulate.

In contrast, manmade carbon emissions have seen CO2 levels rise two thirds in a span of a few centuries. "Climate deniers always say that Earth always rebalances itself," said Suarez. "Well, yes it has. It will rebalance itself, but not on a timescale that is of significance to humans." — AFP

450 Bangladeshis murdered in South...

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Ambassador Shabbir Ahmad Chowdhury said the number killed could be far higher, as many families do not report the deaths. "Many are buried here. It is therefore uncertain to tell the exact number of dead," he told AFP. Chowdhury said most Bangladeshis "hire local hitmen" who carry out killings to settle disputes. "Quite a lot of Bangladeshis have been shot dead, but we don't report them, let alone seek justice, because many of us live here illegally," Abdul Awal Tansen, a top Bangladeshi community leader in Johannesburg, told AFP.

Bangladeshis started migrating to South Africa in the

early 2000s and today an estimated 300,000 live there - many illegally - making them one of the largest Bangladeshi diaspora. Bangladesh media has reported how young men pay traffickers up to \$12,000 to get to South Africa. Thousands own grocery shops across the African nation. Scores of Bangladeshi-owned shops were attacked in the recent anti-immigrant violence, community leaders said. "They often see us as their competitors. We are not taking their jobs yet they attack us with guns," one Bangladeshi migrant, Khalil Mia, told AFP.

The high commissioner said the embassy has urged South African authorities to take action against illegal migration and crime. "They should be more strict on these issues," he said. A foreign ministry official in Dhaka said despite the murders, a growing number of young Bangladeshis still try to get to South Africa illegally. "It is hard to stop the surge of fortune seekers," he said on condition of anonymity. — AFP