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Environment News Futures

Glacier Collapses in Italian Alps, Six Dead: Rescuers

By Gildas LE ROUX

The glacier collapsed on the mountain of Marmolada, the highest in the Italian Dolomites.

An avalanche set off by the collapse of the largest glacier in the Italian Alps killed at least six people and injured eight others Sunday, an emergency services spokeswoman said.

The glacier collapsed on the mountain of Marmolada, the highest in the Italian Dolomites, near the hamlet of Punta Rocca, on the route normally taken to reach its summit.

The disaster struck one day after a record-high temperature of 10 degrees Celsius (50 degrees Fahrenheit) was recorded at the glacier's summit.

'They're Everywhere': Microplastics in Oceans, Air and Human Body

By Amélie BOTTOLLIER-DEPOIS

Scientific studies are increasingly detecting microplastics in some human organs.

From ocean depths to mountain peaks, humans have littered the planet with tiny shards of plastic. We have even absorbed these microplastics into our bodies—with uncertain implications.

Images of plastic pollution have become familiar: a turtle suffocated by a shopping bag, water bottles washed up on beaches, or the monstrous “Great Pacific Garbage Patch” of floating detritus.

Millions of tonnes of plastic produced every year, largely from fossil fuels, make their way into the environment and degrade into smaller and smaller pieces.

“We did not imagine 10 years ago that there could be so many small microplastics, invisible to the naked eye, and that they were everywhere around us,” said Jean-Francois Ghiglione, a researcher at the Laboratory of Microbial Oceanography in France.

“And we could not yet envisage finding them in the human body”.

Now scientific studies are increasingly detecting microplastics in some human organs—including “the lungs, spleen, kidneys, and even the placenta,” Ghiglione told AFP.

Brazil Sets New Six-Month Amazon Deforestation Record

Environmentalists accuse Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro of failing to protect the Amazon from deforestation.

Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon reached a record level during the first half of 2022, the INPE national space agency said Friday.

The world's largest tropical rainforest lost 3,750 square kilometers (1,450 square miles) of jungle since the beginning of the year, the worst numbers for that period since record-keeping began in 2016.

The previous worst figure of 3,605 square kilometers was set last year.

The new figure does not even include the final six days of June.

This year has seen the worst June in 15 years for forest fires.

India Bans Many Single-Use Plastics to Tackle Waste

By Bhuvan Bagga

Many waterways in India are heavily polluted with plastic waste.

India imposed a ban on many single-use plastics on Friday in a bid to tackle waste choking rivers and poisoning wildlife, but experts say it faces severe headwinds from unprepared manufacturers and consumers unwilling to pay more.

The country generates around four million tonnes of plastic waste per year, about a third of which is not recycled and ends up in waterways and landfills that regularly catch fire and exacerbate air pollution.

Stray cows munching on plastic are a common sight in Indian cities and a recent study found traces in the dung of elephants in the northern forests of Uttarakhand state.

Estimates vary but around half comes from items used once, and the new ban covers the production, import and sale of ubiquitous objects like straws and cups made of plastic as well as wrapping on cigarette packets.

Exempt for now are products such as plastic bags below a certain thickness and so-called multi-layered packaging.

Authorities have promised to crack down hard after the ban—first announced in 2018 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi—came into effect.

Inspectors are set to fan out from Friday checking that no suppliers or distributors are flouting the rules at risk of a maximum fine of 100,000 rupees (\$1,265) or five-year jail sentence.

Gambia Bans All Timber Exports to Combat Rosewood Smuggling

The Gambia has banned timber exports and revoked all export licenses to try to combat illegal logging.

The ban has come into effect immediately, and the port authorities have been instructed to refuse to load timber logs onto any vessel.

Sydney Floods Turn Roads into Rivers

World's Tallest Animal, Easily Spotted in Africa, Speeding Towards Extinction

They've disappeared completely from seven African countries, prompting the International Union for Conservation of Nature to sound an alarm and classify them as "vulnerable" in December 2016. About 117,000 giraffes remain in Africa, a drop of nearly 40% from 35 years ago, according to the latest estimates from the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, a Namibia-based nonprofit dedicated to saving giraffes in the wild. That's one living giraffe for every three to four elephants. They've disappeared completely from seven African countries, prompting the International Union for Conservation of Nature to sound an alarm and classify them as "vulnerable" in December 2016.