EDITORIAL - Global warming changing life.

686 words
4 August 2003
Daily Yomiuri
8
English

The weather so far this year has been highly unseasonal.

There have been reports of abnormal weather from many parts of the nation, including unusually heavy rains, below average sunshine hours and abnormally low temperatures. The end of rainy season in the Kanto-Koshinetsu region was the second latest on record.

Summer-sales campaigns at department store and other retailers have been sluggish, and the growth of fruit and vegetables has also been restricted by the unusual weather- resulting in barely ripe tomatoes and less sweet watermelons.

The growth of rice has been seriously affected by the low temperatures and lower hours of sunshine since June. The abnormal weather has adversely impaired the growth of rice in 20 prefectures, especially in the Kinki district. The Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry has set up a task force to provide farmers nationwide with technical advice on how to prevent the unseasonable weather from damaging their rice crops.

The ministry last took such action in 1993, when unusually cold conditions restricted the nation's rice harvests.

Other countries are also experiencing unusual weather patterns. Millions of residents in southern China are experiencing a shortage of water resulting from a long spell of dry weather. In Shanghai, many factories have been temporarily shut down following restrictions on electricity consumption due to the intense heat.

The United States and many European countries are also suffering from significantly lower than average rainfall and heat waves.

Warmer Earth behind wild weather

According to meteorologists, the abnormal weather can be attributed to global warming.

The onset of global warming can cause climate changes worldwide, including temperature and rainfall extremes. The World Meteorological Organization has said global warming is contributing to abnormal weather conditions in many parts of the world.

To reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, it is essential for the international community to cooperate in achieving the goal.

The Kyoto Protocol on global warming, which has set numerical targets to be achieved by individual nations in curtailing their greenhouse gas emissions, is likely to take effect by the end of the year, as Russia is certain to ratify the pact.

However, efforts to fight global warming will be insufficient if the United States, which produces a quarter of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, does not retract its

decision to withdraw from the protocol. It is essential that the United States return to the Kyoto Protocol if the goals pertaining to global warming are to be met.
Intl. weather monitoring required
Another urgent task is to set up a global framework to quickly predict the onset of unusual weather patterns by monitoring and detecting climate changes.
The weather in one region is strongly influenced by climatic conditions in another, including winds, temperatures, snowfalls and oceanic currents. For instance, the amount of snowfall on the Himalayas can affect weather conditions during the rainy season in Japan. To predict abnormal weather, it is essential to carry out weather observation with a global perspective.
In late July, more than 30 nations, including Japan and the United States, met for the Earth Observation Summit in Washington. The meeting sought to ensure that its members cooperate to establish an international weather observation network. For years, Japan has played a significant role in promoting global weather monitoring. Its achievements include the launch of a tropical rainfall measuring satellite and the development of a computer to calculate atmospheric movements on a global scale.
However, domestic financial difficulties appear to be hampering Japan's contribution in this regard. For example, the operational rules established by the government for its contribution to global weather observation does not allow for budgetary appropriation for repairs on broken buoys used in oceanic current observation.
With this in mind, it is necessary to make the global weather observation system even more efficient and effective. A number of new measures need to be applied, including a more even distribution of weather observation tasks by summit member nations.
The global fight against damage from abnormal weather requires the combined wisdom of the world's nations.
(From The Yomiuri Shimbun, Aug. 4).

Nations pledge to share their environment data

Washington Post
243 words
3 August 2003
Houston Chronicle
4 STAR
27
English

WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON - Nearly five dozen nations and international organizations have agreed to develop a plan to share world environmental data and create methods for continuous monitoring of Earth systems ranging from weather and sea temperatures to atmospheric quality and ultraviolet light.

Participants at the Earth Observation Summit, hosted by the U.S. State Department, formed an ad hoc group to design a plan for nations and organizations to pool their monitoring data into an integrated worldwide framework.
"It's a first step toward solving a large political problem," said Conrad Lautenbacher, administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "This aims to build a system in which nations agree to exchange data on a free and open basis."
The meeting, attended by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans, issued a declaration describing the development by the end of 2004 of an "implementation plan" for nations and organizations to integrate their global monitoring systems.
The data would measure a variety of phenomena vital to decisionmakers as diverse as car makers interested in emission controls and farmers worried about the chance of rain.
"Scientists estimate 30 percent of (world gross domestic product) is affected by knowledge of what's going on in the environment," Lautenbacher said.
Jeffrey Sachs, director of Columbia University's Earth Institute and a frequent critic of the Bush administration, endorsed the plan as "serious and important."

Canada backs U.S. weather watch plan: Anderson wants $30M to join global network

Kate Jaimet
The Ottawa Citizen
443 words
2 August 2003
Ottawa Citizen
Final
A4
English

Canada must spend up to $30 million and reopen a $300,000 Arctic weather station, to participate in an American-led, global weather watching network, says Environment Minister David Anderson.
Mr. Anderson said the proposed network, promoted by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell at the Earth Observation Summit in Washington, shows a "remarkable" multilateralist approach from a country that just two years ago withdrew from the international Kyoto Protocol on climate change.
"The rhetoric is multilateral. The rhetoric is global. The rhetoric is: 'We need you, and we are genuinely here to help,' " Mr. Anderson said in a telephone interview from Washington. "As a person who has been very concerned about what I regard as American indifference to the international system, I was very encouraged."
The proposed Earth observation network would compile information from satellites, radar, weather balloons, and ocean weather buoys -- together with traditional readings

of temperature, precipitation, and barometric pressure -- from around the globe. Scientists would have access to the information, allowing them to make more accurate predictions of upcoming catastrophes like droughts and floods, and to better understand long-term climate patterns. The network is expected to take at least 10 years to build.
"The future of countries large and small, developed and developing, depends upon the global ecosystem that embraces and sustains us all," Mr. Powell said at the summit. "Whether we are talking about geophysics or geopolitics, our 21st-century world is profoundly interconnected."
Although global weather information is already shared through the World Meteorological Organization, Mr. Anderson said the American initiative would help standardize scientific reporting, increase information sharing, and improve weather monitoring in poor countries and in sparsely populated areas like the Canadian Arctic.
"If we're going to buy into a global system, and the Americans drive this, they want to patch the holes that exist," Mr. Anderson said. "We have Arctic stations, such as Eureka, which could do more. Similarly, we have to do more at sea. I would think we're going to have to put in a few more bucks."
Mr. Anderson said the Canadian government spends $80 million on weather monitoring, and could spend another $20 million or $30 million to participate fully in the Earth observation system. Canada mothballed its high-tech stratosphere monitoring observatory at Eureka, 960 kilometres south of the North Pole, in 2002 to save its $300,000 annual budget.
The Earth observation system would help scientists to understand global climate change, a phenomenon which Canada is trying to counter through the international Kyoto protocol.

30 nations agree to share data on the environment

Andrew C. Revkin
The New York Times
473 words

EARTH OBSERVATION SUMMIT

2 August 2003
International Herald Tribune
4
English

WASHINGTON:
Officials from more than 30 countries have agreed to expand monitoring of the atmosphere, the oceans and the land and to create a system for sharing the resulting data. At a meeting organized by the Bush administration, the representatives said the goal of the 10- year effort was to fill in big gaps, primarily in poor countries, in the network of instruments recording earth's vital signs. The resulting benefits, like better crop and weather forecasts, are to be shared by rich and poor countries alike. Such a system was made possible by the enormous growth of the Internet and advances in monitoring technology, participants said, and it was necessitated by climate shifts and stresses on agriculture, water supplies and ecosystems.
Whether we're talking about geophysics or geopolitics, our 21st- century world is profoundly interconnected, said Secretary of State Colin Powell.
We all need a better understanding of the earth and its systems, he said. Just think how a farmer in East Africa or a forest manager in the Southwestern United States could benefit from access to improved forecasting of rains or drought conditions.
He and many other participants said the benefits of an integrated earth observation system would include reduced damage from storms, bolstered food supplies, better protection of threatened wild areas and a clearer view of the causes and risks of global warming. Jeffrey Sachs, the director of the Earth Institute of Columbia University, said that it will certainly take billions of dollars over the coming decade to develop a speedy, efficient monitoring system and to help poor countries benefit from it. Most of the participating countries, which ranged in size and power from Germany to Gabon, credited the Bush administration for pushing the project even though they differ with President George W. Bush over global warming, the most contentious international environmental issue right now. Bush has rejected the Kyoto Protocol, the first binding treaty that would limit heat-trapping greenhouse gases linked to rising temperatures, while most of the participating countries have already ratified it. Delegates at the meeting noted many other challenges, including overcoming reluctance in some countries to share data out of security concerns or fear that it will lead to intrusive policies by wealthy countries if, for example, they detect deforestation in the tropics. But others said that cooperation was essential, particularly now that it was clear that so many environmental issues respected no borders. More cooperation will benefit both the north and south, said Godwin Obasi, the secretary general of the World Meteorological Organization.
With the climate system, you can't just take measurements from one sector and know how things are changing, he said. We have only one atmosphere, which is common to all of us.

Earth Observation System takes shape.

By - Reuters.
225 words
2 August 2003
The Hindu
English

WASHINGTON Representatives of 35 countries and 22 multilateral organisations met at the U.S. State Department on Friday to start work on integrating systems to monitor the weather, oceans, land use and climate change.
Known as the Earth Observation System, it would make better use of data which scientists now collect piecemeal and could save billions of dollars a year by helping farmers, weather forecasters and people who prepare for natural disasters, the organisers said.
"Such a system would bring together national and multinational surface, airborne and space-based measurements of the earth into a cooperative network of systems," said the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell.
"An integrated Earth Observation System would vastly increase our store of knowledge and leverage billions of dollars of worldwide investment," he said.
The organisers said better forecasting of the Pacific Ocean weather phenomenon known as El Nino is already saving farmers $450 millions to $550 millions a year. If weather forecasts were more accurate by just one degree Fahrenheit, the savings in electricity costs would be at least $1 billion a year, they said.
The meeting is expected to approve a declaration in which the countries and organisations make a commitment to cooperate in the project and to set up a working group to prepare a 10-year implementation plan.

CP
423 words
1 August 2003
07:10
Broadcast News

English

(Earth-Observation)
Environment Minister David Anderson isn't expecting the U-S to change its mind on the Kyoto protocol.
But, he says American officials appear to be getting the message on the issue of climate change.
Anderson made the comments while meeting with representatives from dozens of countries on a new global Earth-observation system.
The meeting is being held in Washington. (6)
(Boy-Heart)

Global network will collect Earth data

Beth Gorham
The Canadian Press
332 words
1 August 2003
The Hamilton Spectator
Final
C03
English

Washington
A U.S.-led global initiative to collect data about the Earth suggests American officials are becoming more serious about climate change, Environment Minister David Anderson said yesterday.
About 30 countries and 30 international organizations agreed to develop a plan to share world environmental data and create methods for continuous monitoring of Earth systems, ranging from weather and sea temperatures to atmospheric quality and ultraviolet light.
Participants at the Earth Observation Summit, hosted by the U.S. State Department, formed an ad hoc group to design a plan for nations and organizations to pool their monitoring data into an integrated worldwide framework.
Anderson, who announced Canada is sharing its climate archive dating back to 1840, said high-ranking officials, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, are talking about global warming.
"I was very encouraged, as a person who believes that the United States in fact made a mistake in not continuing with the Kyoto process," said the minister.
Under the Kyoto climate accord, Canada has committed to a 6 per cent reduction in 1990 levels of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming by 2012. It has been ratified by 111 countries representing 44.2 per cent of global greenhouse emissions. But

the United States, worried about the costs to industries reducing their emissions, hasn't signed on.
References to climate change have been taken out of Environmental Protection Agency reports. And while the Bush administration recently announced a 10-year, $103-million plan to speed research on the subject, environmentalists say there's been more than enough study and it's clearly time to cut emissions.
The global database would take information provided by farmers, satellites, weather balloons and other sources from around the world and merge it for the first time.
The plan would include helping poor countries develop monitoring systems. Canada spends about $80 million a year collecting this kind of physical information.

Weather watch budget needs $30M: Anderson

Kate Jaimet
CanWest News Services
492 words
1 August 2003
Edmonton Journal
Final
B6
English

OTTAWA
OTTAWA - Canada must spend up to $30 million and reopen a $300,000 Arctic weather station to participate in an American-led, worldwide weather watching network, Environment Minister David Anderson said Thursday.
Anderson said the proposed network, which was being promoted by American Secretary of State Colin Powell at the Earth Observation Summit in Washington, shows a "remarkable" multilateralist approach from a country that just two years ago withdrew from the international Kyoto Protocol on climate change.
"The rhetoric is multilateral. The rhetoric is global. The rhetoric is: 'We need you, and we are genuinely here to help,' " Anderson said in a telephone interview from Washington. "As a person who has been very concerned about what I regard as American indifference to the international system, I was very encouraged."
The proposed Earth observation network would compile information from satellites, radar, weather balloons and ocean weather buoys -- together with traditional readings of temperature, precipitation, and barometric pressure -- from around the globe. Scientists would have access to all of the information, allowing them to make more accurate predictions of upcoming catastrophes like droughts and floods, and to better understand long-term climate patterns. The network is expected to take at least 10 years to build.
"The future of countries large and small, developed and developing, depends upon the global ecosystem that embraces and sustains us all," Powell said at the summit.

"Whether we are talking about geophysics or geopolitics, our 21st-century world is profoundly interconnected."

Although global weather information is already shared through the World Meteorological Organization, Anderson said the American initiative would help standardize scientific reporting, increase information sharing, and improve weather monitoring both in poor countries and in sparsely populated areas like the Canadian Arctic.

"If we're going to buy into a global system, and the Americans drive this, they want to patch the holes that exist," Anderson said. "We have Arctic stations, such as Eureka, which could do more. Similarly, we have to do more at sea. I would think we're going to have to put in a few more bucks."

Anderson said the Canadian government currently spends $80 million on weather monitoring, and could spend another $20 million or $30 million to participate fully in the Earth observation system. Canada mothballed its high-tech stratosphere monitoring observatory at Eureka, 960 kilometres south of the North Pole, in 2002 to save its $300,000 annual budget.

The Earth observation system would help scientists to understand global climate change, a phenomenon which Canada is trying to counter through the international Kyoto protocol. The federal government allocated $1.7 billion to Kyoto initiatives in its February budget, but cabinet has not yet decided how to spend the money, Anderson said.

"We have a committee of cabinet and that committee labours mightily, but I'm not yet sure what it's going to produce," he said.

Ottawa Citizen

Nations seek to integrate climate change tracking mechanisms.

By Matthew Lee.
695 words
1 August 2003
Agence France Presse
English

EARTH OBSERVATION SUMMIT

Government officials and scientists from more that 30 countries have called for the speedy development of an integrated method to observe climate change and other environmental trends on Earth.

Participants at the so-called "Earth Observation Summit," held Thursday at the US State Department, pledged to move ahead with an "international, comprehensive, coordinated and sustained" monitoring mechanism within 10 years time.

"We, the participants, call for and intend to participate in a comprehensive, coordinated Earth observation system that is used for the benefit of humankind and thereby contributes to sustaining the Earth for future generations," they said in a declaration after the meeting.

The aim is to link the thousands of individual land-, sea-and space-based climate observation assets to better predict environmental changes and natural disasters and limit their impact, they said.

A conceptual framework for linking those assets is expected to be developed by the spring of 2004 when a ministerial level meeting on the project will be held in Tokyo which will then lead to the actual creation of the new system.

Such a system would greatly improve weather forecasting, particularly with major trends such as El Nino, crop yield estimates, the monitoring of water and air quality, boost airline safety and promote climate-related health research, they said.

"Our cooperation will enable us to develop the capability to predict droughts, prepare for weather emergencies, plan and protect crops, manage coastal areas and fisheries, and monitor air quality," US President George W. Bush said in a statement.

The leaders of the Group of Eight industrialized nations called for the initiative at their last summit in Evian, France last month with an eye toward helping mainly developing countries in the southern hemisphere.

But, as US officials noted, an integrated global climate monitoring system would help the entire population of earth, noting the worldwide benefit of El Nino forecasting are estimated at between 450 to 550 million dollars per year.

For every dollar invested in improving weather forecasting, farmers reap 15 dollars in benefits, they said.

The annual cost of electricity could decrease by at least one billion dollars if those forecasts could be improved by just one degree, they said.

And, the airline industry, which now loses about four billion dollars a year because of weather-related delays and cancellations, could cut those losses by as much as 1.7 billion dollars through better forecasting and observation.

"The benefits of an Earth Observation system ... are vitally important to the United States and to the people of the world," said US Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham as he opened the conference.

"A more systematic, open, and timely sharing of existing earth observations information would greatly improve responses to natural hazards or disasters," Secretary of State Colin Powell told the conference.

France's junior minister for research and new technologies, Claudie Haignere, at the summit called for urgent international efforts to cut greenhouse gases - CO2 basically - for which, she said, "planetary monitoring devices are indispensable."
The United States dropped out of the 1997 Kyoto treaty on global warming - ratified by more than 100 mostly developing nations - shortly after Bush came to power in 2001. The US leader wants to work with his allies to cut greenhouse gases without harming US industries and workers.
The one-day summit will be followed by a two-day working session at which delegates are to lay the groundwork for the "conceptual framework" for an integrated earth observation system.
Part of that framework is expected to focus on integrating data from weather satellites and other space-based tracking systems but organizers said they were equally concerned about sea-based assets.
Currently, a number of countries are cooperating in the so-called ARGO system which has deployed nearly 825 ocean monitoring buoys which drop below the sea surface to collect and record data and then transmit them to satellites.
However, organizers said ARGO needed to be vastly expanded to include at least 3,000 buoys.
The framework is also expected to call for massive international investment in super-computing simulation to accurately predict environmental and weather changes.
mvl/fgf.