

Mistakes in Climate Report Fuel Skepticism

Scientists Say Small Errors Do Not Change the Reality of Global Warming; But Errors Have Given Traction to Warming Deniers

By Mark Phillips

(CBS) The U.N.'s climate chief admitted Thursday that scientists made mistakes in a major study of melting glaciers in the Himalayas. It's the latest example of scientific errors in climate reports. Experts insist **they don't change the overall conclusion** - that climate change is real. But as **CBS News correspondent Mark Phillips** reports, they're providing ammunition for skeptics.

You know you're in trouble when you're being **spoofed on YouTube**.

The subject of the spoof is Michael Mann of Penn State University, who was accused of tampering with climate data to produce his famous **hockey stick graph** which shows that the rise in man-made greenhouse gasses corresponds to a rise in world temperatures.

An academic board today cleared Mann, saying his science holds up - but the damage may have already been done.

The biggest splash these days in the global warming argument may not be caused by the world's melting glaciers. It may be caused by a series of gaffes by climate change scientists.

The latest one involves temperature data from weather stations in China used in global warming calculations.

The problem is that where the weather stations are located matters. One located in the city will give consistently higher temperatures than one out in the country. The allegation is the researchers used Chinese data when they really didn't know where their weather stations were. It's just a small part of a worldwide database, but it's the little mistakes that make a difference.

Those mistakes include a line in the last report by the U.N. Panel on Climate Change - the bible of climate science - which claimed glaciers in the Himalayas might disappear by the year 2035. The panel had to admit the claim was wrong and the climate change skeptics jumped in.

"Any scientist who read that figure just laughed because they knew it couldn't be true," said Patrick Michael of the Cato Institute. "There is no doubt the trust in the U.N. panel has been undermined."

That trust had already been undermined by the series of leaked emails at Britain's University of East Anglia - one of the world's big climate science centers - which seemed to show that inconvenient facts were being hidden.

It's a frustrating time for climate scientists, the vast majority of whom believe that despite what they see as small errors, the basic science of the human role in global warming remains true.

"I am concerned that it appears the whole edifice has been undermined by these couple of bricks that are flaking a bit," said Brian Hoskins a professor at Imperial College London. It's a danger, he said.

The scientists may still believe they're winning the scientific argument, but they're in danger of losing the public relations war.