

UN climate chief Rajendra Pachauri 'got grants through bogus claims'

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The chairman of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), has used bogus claims that Himalayan glaciers were melting to win grants worth hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Rajendra Pachauri's Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), based in New Delhi, was awarded up to £310,000 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the lion's share of a £2.5m EU grant funded by European taxpayers.

It means that EU taxpayers are funding research into a scientific claim about glaciers that any ice researcher should immediately recognise as bogus. The revelation comes just a week after The Sunday Times highlighted serious scientific flaws in the IPCC's 2007 benchmark report on the likely impacts of global warming.

The IPCC had warned that climate change was likely to melt most of the Himalayan glaciers by 2035 - an idea considered ludicrous by most glaciologists. Last week a humbled IPCC retracted that claim and corrected its report.

Since then, however, The Sunday Times has discovered that the same bogus claim has been cited in grant applications for TERI.

One of them, announced earlier this month just before the scandal broke, resulted in a £310,000 grant from Carnegie.

An abstract of the grant application published on Carnegie's website said: "The Himalaya glaciers, vital to more than a dozen major rivers that sustain hundreds of millions of people in South Asia, are melting and receding at a dangerous rate.

"One authoritative study reported that most of the glaciers in the region "will vanish within forty years as a result of global warming, resulting in widespread water shortages,"

The Carnegie money was specifically given to aid research into "the potential security and humanitarian impact on the region" as the glaciers began to disappear. Pachauri has since acknowledged that this threat, if it exists, will take centuries to have any serious effect.

The money was initially given to the Global Centre, an Icelandic Foundation which then channelled it, with Carnegie's involvement, to TERI.

The cash was acknowledged by TERI in a press release, issued on January 15, just before the glacier scandal became public, in which Pachauri repeated the claims of imminent glacial melt.

It said: ""According to predictions of scientific merit they may indeed melt away in several decades."

The same release also quoted Dr Syed Hasnain, the glaciologist who, back in 1999, made the now discredited claim that Himalayan glaciers would be gone by 2035.

He now heads Pachauri's glaciology unit at TERI which sought the grants and which is carrying out the glacier research.

Critics point out that Hasnain, of all people, should have known the claim that the Himalayan glaciers could melt by 2035 was bogus because he was meant to be a leading glaciologist specialising in the Himalayas.

Any suggestion that TERI has repeated an unchecked scientific claim without checking it, in order to win grants, could prove hugely embarrassing for Pachauri and the IPCC.

The second grant, from the EU, totalled £2.5m and was designed to "to assess the impact of Himalayan glaciers retreat".

It was part of the EU's HighNoon project, launched last May to fund research into how India might adapt to loss of glaciers.

In one presentation at last May's launch, Anastasios Kentarchos, of the European Commission's Climate Change and Environmental Risks Unit, specifically cited the bogus IPCC claims about glacier melt as a reason for pouring EU taxpayers' money into the project.

Pachauri spoke at the same presentation and Hasnain is understood to have been present in the audience.

The EU grant was split between leading European research institutions including Britain's Met Office, with TERI getting a major but unspecified share because it represented the host country.

The "Glaciergate" affair has seen Pachauri come under increasing pressure in India, prompting him to call a press conference yesterday (Saturday) where he dismissed calls for his resignation and said no action would be taken against the authors of the erroneous section of the IPCC report.

He said: "I have no intention of resigning from my position," adding the errors were unintentional and not significant in comparison to the entire report.

However, other questions remain. One of the most important is in connection with Pachauri's earnings.

In an interview with The Sunday Times he said his only income came from his salary at TERI. However TERI does not publish his salary and he refused to divulge it.

In India questions are also being asked about Pachauri's links with GloriOil, a Houston, Texas-based oil technology company that specialises in recovering extra oil from declining oil fields . Pachauri is listed as a founder and scientific advisor.

Critics say it is odd for a man committed to decarbonising energy supplies to be linked to an oil company.

The problems come at a bad time for the IPCC which is recruiting scientists for its fifth report into the science and impacts underlying global warming.

Yesterday, Pachauri said he intended to remain as director of the IPCC to oversee the fifth IPCC assessment report dealing with sea level rise and ice sheets, oceans, clouds and carbon accounting. The report is expected by 2014.