

# Antarctic polar icecap formed '33.6 million years ago'

Malaysia Sun (ANI) Wednesday 29th May, 2013

The Antarctic continental ice cap came into existence during the Oligocene epoch, some 33.6 million years ago, according to data from an international expedition.

These findings were based on information contained in ice sediments from different depths.

The expedition led by the Andalusian Institute of Earth Sciences (IACT)-a Spanish National Research Council-University of Granada joint centre.

Before the ice covered Antarctica, the Earth was a warm place with a tropical climate. In this region, plankton diversity was high until glaciation reduced the populations leaving only those capable of surviving in the new climate.

The Integrated Ocean Drilling Program international expedition has obtained this information from the paleoclimatic history preserved in sediment strata in the Antarctic depths.

IACT researcher Carlota Escutia, who led the expedition, explained that "the fossil record of dinoflagellate cyst communities reflects the substantial reduction and specialization of these species that took place when the ice cap became established and, with it, marked seasonal ice-pack formation and melting began".

The appearance of the Antarctic polar icecap marks the beginning of plankton communities that are still functioning today.

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