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Japanese supercomputer ranked world's fastest

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SAN JOSE — A Japanese supercomputer that studies the climate and other aspects of the Earth maintained its ranking as the world's fastest computer, according to a study released Friday.

The Earth Simulator in Yokohama, Japan performs 35.86 trillion calculations per second — more than 4 1/2 times greater than the next-fastest machine.

Earth Simulator, which was built by NEC Corp and installed earlier this year, first appeared on the list in June. It was the first time a supercomputer outside the United States topped the list.

Two new machines, called "ASCI Q," debuted in the No. 2 and No. 3 spots. The computers, which each can run 7.73 trillion calculations per second, were built by Hewlett-Packard Co for Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico.

For the first time, high-performance machines built by clustering personal computers appeared in the top 10.

A system built by Linux NetworX and Quadrics for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory ranked No. 5. A system built by High Performance Technologies Inc for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Forecast Systems Laboratory was No. 8.

Hewlett-Packard Co led with 137 systems on the list, followed by International Business Machines Corp with 131 systems. No. 3 Sun Microsystems Inc. built 88 of the top 500 systems.

The Top 500 list, which has been released twice annually since 1993, is compiled by researchers at University of Mannheim, Germany; the Department of Energy's National Energy Research Scientific Computing Center in Berkeley, California and the University of Tennessee. (Wire reports)

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