

Himalayan glaciers 'could disappear completely by 2035'

Himalayan glaciers are at risk of disappearing completely by 2035, Indian climate experts have warned.

Paul Eccleston

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Studies have revealed that the rate of glacier melt is increasing and that they are receding faster than in any other part of the world.

Muneer Ahmad of the National Geophysical Research Institute in Hyderabad, said the nose of the Kolhai glacier in Kashmir, one of the largest glaciers in the Himalayas, had receded by almost 22 metres in 2007 while several smaller glaciers had disappeared completely.



Himalayan glaciers 'could disappear completely by 2035'
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And Ajit Tyagi, Director General of Indian Meteorological Department, warned that the glaciers could disappear even sooner if the earth continues to warm at its current rate.

He told a recent one-day conference that the 15,000 Himalayan glaciers form a unique reservoir which supports perennial rivers such as the Indus, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra and which are the main source of fresh water for billions of people in South Asian countries.

As a consequence of the current rate of melting rivers that criss-cross the northern Indian plain, such as the Ganga, Indus, Brahmaputra could turn seasonal in the near future.

Some scientists believe that clouds of pollutants - almost two miles thick - which are suspended over Asia may be a part of the problem. It had been thought the clouds, caused mainly by domestic wood and dung fires and through the burning of forests and fields for agriculture, helped cool the land by filtering out sunlight.

But it is now known that soot particles in the cloud actually absorb the sunlight and magnify solar heating on the ground by almost 50 per cent.

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