Forest Fires May Cause Glaciers to Melt Faster

BD Kasniyal

Rampant forest fires in the Kumaon region and scanty rain during the winter have led to not only rise in the minimum temperature but also rapid melting of Himalayan glaciers.

The smoke emitted by forest fires forms carbon layers, which cover the glacier snow, thus resulting in its fast melting, say scientists of the GB Pant institute of Himalayan Environment and Development at Katarmal, Kosi, in Almora district.

Scientists at the institute say due to weak western disturbance this year, there has been scant snowfall at high Himalayan glaciers. Besides, the carbon cover on the glacier snow caused by rampant forest fires this season has caused glaciers to melt fast. “Our institute has decided to study the effect of less snowfall on glaciers. A study tour of the Gangotri glacier from May to October this year will be conducted,” said Kirit Kumar, senior scientist at the institute.

Meanwhile, weatherman has said due to the scorching sun this month, the tendency of maximum temperature rising was quite possible. The minimum temperature this month has remained low than that last year. “The maximum temperature in April last year was 29°C due to 46.2 mm rain. We are expecting a minimum temperature of more than 30°C this April as the rainfall of only 4.2 mm has been recorded till date. Heavy rainfall is not expected in near future,” said RS Rana, official of district disaster management.

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