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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ICE FLOODS IN INDIA

Far more spectacular than the hurricane floods that recently visited the southeastern United States will be a tremendous deluge imminent in ~~northwestern~~ India, where a dam of glacier ice, which has blocked the course of the Shyok River for two years, may soon collapse, permitting millions of tons of water to rush downstream. The Shyok is a tributary of the Indus and the dam was formed by the advance of the Khumban Glacier, at a lofty elevation in the Karakorum Mountains, 140 miles north of Leh.

Many floods of the same character have previously occurred in this region. There was a notable case in 1835, when whole villages were swept away for a distance of 300 miles along the Indus. The wave crest traveled at a speed of 25 miles an hour. Probably the greatest known example of the bursting of a glacier lake was in 1841, when the advance of the Biafo Glacier across the Shyok Valley had formed a temporary body of water 12 miles long, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles wide and 200 feet deep. The bursting of the barrier sent a tremendous flood down the Indus, destroying part of an army of Sikhs encamped at Attock, 300 miles distant from the break.

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