ITALY

Avalanche in Alps Kills at Least Seven

At least seven people were killed and about 20 were missing following an avalanche of glacial ice in the Italian Alps. Rescue workers continued to search on Monday, though officials said they were unlikely to find survivors.

A large chunk of the Marmolada glacier in the Italian Dolomites broke off and slid down the mountain Sunday, reaching a speed of almost 200 miles an hour. It is estimated to have been 200 yards wide when it started and double that when it came to a stop a mile down the mountain.

The avalanche fell across a trail that leads to the peak of the glacier, which reaches about 11,000 feet above sea level. Helicopters evacuated about 300 people from the peak after the avalanche.

Unseasonably high temperatures in much of the northern half of the country over the last two months contributed to the glacier breaking loose, but the underlying cause is decades of progressively warmer temperatures that have weakened glaciers across the Alps, said Renato Colucci, a glaciologist at Italy’s National Research Council.

Water flows under glaciers in the Alps have grown in recent years as masses of ice have melted. That has led to increased instability and makes large avalanches such as the one on Sunday more likely, Mr. Colucci said. Scientists at the National Research Council had estimated that the Marmolada glacier would completely disappear by 2050, but due to a recent acceleration in ice melting, some studies have brought the date forward to as early as 2045.

Italian media reported that four of the victims had been identified as Italian. The area is popular during the summer with foreign tourists.

—Eric Sylvers