

Cyclone batters east India coastline

November 16 2018



Authorities in India's Tamil Nadu had been warning fishermen since Sunday not to risk going out to sea as Cyclone Gaja approached

Powerful winds felled trees, destroyed homes and forced thousands to flee to safety as Cyclone Gaja barrelled into India's eastern coast Friday.

Winds packing up to 120 kilometres (75 miles) per hour battered Tamil Nadu state as the storm hit the coast near Nagapattinam early Friday

bringing [heavy rains](#), India's weather office said.

More than 80,000 residents from half a dozen districts in the southern state were evacuated to shelters.

The storm was predicted to move westwards and gradually weaken before heading into the Arabian Sea, the India Meteorological Department said.

Torrential rain caused waterlogging and threatened landslides. There were widespread power outages in the region.

Authorities closed schools and colleges and sent out disaster management teams to move fallen [trees](#) and electricity pylons from roads.

Thousands of emergency workers were on standby along with two naval ships with divers, helicopters and inflatable boats.

Authorities had been warning fishermen since Sunday not to risk going out to sea.

Gaja is the second major [storm](#) to hit India's east coast in recent weeks. Cyclone Titli battered Odisha state in October, killing at least two people.

Storms regularly hit southern India between April and December. Last year, Cyclone Ockhi left nearly 250 people dead in the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

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