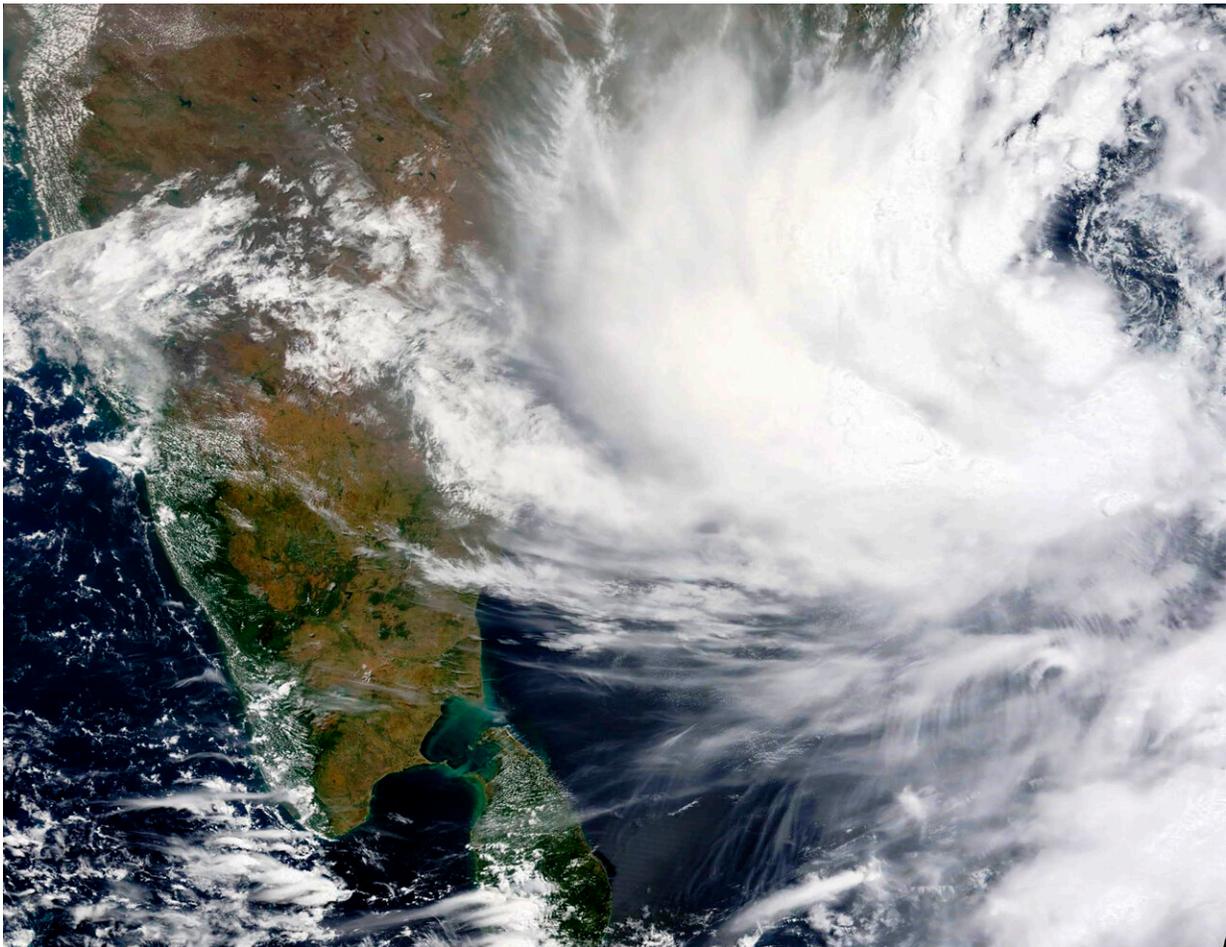


Thousands evacuated in India as strong cyclone inches closer

May 25 2021



This Monday, May, 24, 2021, satellite image provided by NASA shows Cyclone Yaas approaching India's eastern coast. Yaas is expected to make landfall on Wednesday, May 26, 2021, and could pack sustained winds of up to 165 kilometers per hour (102 miles per hour), the India Meteorological Department said. It said the storm was forecast to hit the eastern states of West Bengal and

Odisha, just days after a powerful storm battered the country's western coast and killed at least 140 people. (NASA Worldview, Earth Observing System Data and Information System (EOSDIS) via AP)

Tens of thousands of people were evacuated Tuesday in low-lying areas of two Indian states and moved to cyclone shelters to escape a powerful storm barreling toward the eastern coast.

Cyclone Yaas is set to turn into a "very severe cyclonic storm" with sustained wind speeds of up to 177 kilometers per hour (110 miles per hour), the India Meteorological Department said. The cyclone is expected to make landfall early Wednesday in Odisha and West Bengal states.

The cyclone coming amid a devastating coronavirus surge complicates India's efforts to deal with both just 10 days after Cyclone Tauktae hit India's [west coast](#) and killed more than 140 people.

Thousands of emergency personnel have been deployed in [coastal regions](#) of the two states for evacuation and any possible rescue operations, said S.N. Pradhan, director of India's National Disaster Response Force. India's [air force](#) and navy were also on standby to carry out relief work.

Fishing trawlers and boats have been told to take [shelter](#) until further notice as forecasters warned of high tidal waves.

In West Bengal, authorities were scrambling to move tens of thousands of people to cyclone shelters. Officials said at least 20 districts in the state will feel the brunt of the storm.



A man walks holding an umbrella during a drizzle at the Puri beach on the Bay of Bengalcoast in Odisha, India, Monday, May 24, 2021. Cyclone Yaas was forecast to hit the eastern states of West Bengal and Odisha on Wednesday. Credit: AP Photo



Fishermen shift their boats to safer grounds as a precaution against Cyclone Yaas at the Puri beach on the Bay of Bengal coast in Odisha, India, Monday, May 24, 2021. The storm was forecast to hit the eastern states of West Bengal and Odisha on Wednesday. Credit: AP Photo

Last May, nearly 100 people died in Cyclone Amphan, the most [powerful storm](#) in more than a decade to hit eastern India, including West Bengal state. It flattened villages, destroyed farms and left millions without power in eastern India and Bangladesh.

"We haven't been able to fix the damage to our home from the last cyclone. Now another cyclone is coming, how will we stay here?" said Samitri, who uses only one name.

In Odisha, a state already battered by coronavirus infections, authorities evacuated nearly 15,000 people living along the coast and moved them to cyclone shelters, senior officer Pradeep Jena said.

In a televised address Monday, the state's chief minister, Naveen Patnaik, appealed to people being moved to [cyclone](#) shelters to wear double masks and maintain social distancing. He asked authorities to distribute masks to the evacuated people.

"We have to face both the challenges simultaneously," Patnaik said.

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