

# *Cyclone Biparjoy disrupts power and kills at least two in India and Pakistan*

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New Delhi, June 16 (RHC)-- Roofs have been blown off houses and trees and electric poles uprooted, leaving thousands without power as a severe cyclone makes landfall and heavy rains lash both the Indian

and Pakistani coasts. At least two people died in India's western state of Gujarat after being swept away by floods just before the cyclone hit, officials said on Friday.

More than 180,000 people were evacuated in India and Pakistan in the last few days as authorities braced for the cyclone, named Biparjoy, which means "disaster" or "calamity" in the Bengali language. It made landfall late on Thursday near Jakhau, a port in Gujarat that is close to the border with Pakistan, weather officials said.

Biparjoy weakened to a cyclonic storm from a severe cyclonic storm on Friday morning, India's Meteorological Department (IMD) said in its latest bulletin, with speeds going down from 105kph (65.24mph) to 85kph (52.82mph). Wind speeds are likely to reduce further by the afternoon, the bulletin said.

Two men, both shepherds, died while trying to rescue their cattle from being swept away during heavy rains and floods in Gujarat's Bhavnagar district on Thursday evening, the cyclone control room said.

Power was disrupted at many places in the Kutch district of Gujarat because of strong winds, said Amit Arora, a top district official overseeing rescue operations.

India's weather department warned of heavy to very heavy rainfall in Gujarat and the neighbouring state of Rajasthan through Friday.

Neighbouring Pakistan's disaster management authority on Friday said the cyclone is losing its intensity. "It is forecasted to further weaken into a cyclonic storm and subsequently into a depression by [Friday] evening," the authority said in a statement.

Sardar Sarfaraz, chief of the Pakistan Meteorological Department, told Al Jazeera the cyclone could unleash intense rains in Pakistan's coastal areas on Friday and Saturday. "The cyclone's strength has reduced greatly and we expect it to turn into a depression by evening. However, the cyclonic influence will cause heavy rains and winds in few areas, which could vary between 60 to 80 km per hour (37 to 50 miles)," he said.

Sarfaraz said the government has asked the authorities to ensure that about 82,000 people displaced due to the cyclone are not sent back to their homes before Saturday due to the weather conditions. Many of the areas affected were inundated in last year's catastrophic monsoon floods, which put a third of Pakistan under water, damaging two million homes and killing nearly 1,700 people.

"In Pakistan, Cyclone Biparjoy threatens a new crisis for children and families in Sindh, the province worst affected by last year's devastating floods," Noala Skinner, UNICEF's regional director for South Asia, said.

Cyclones – the equivalent of hurricanes in the North Atlantic or typhoons in the northwest Pacific – are a regular and deadly menace on the coast of the northern Indian Ocean, where tens of millions of people live.

A 2021 study found that the frequency, duration and intensity of cyclones in the Arabian Sea had increased significantly between 1982 and 2019, and experts say the increase will continue, making preparations for natural disasters more urgent.

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