

# ECO

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## **Climate change and Pandemic - India devastated by double whammy !**

On the same day the country confirmed its highest-ever daily death toll from COVID-19, confirmed 4,329 deaths from COVID-19, it was also hit by a deadly storm. On May 18 2021, Cyclone Tauktae barreled into India's west coast overnight packing wind gusts of up to 130 miles per hour — some of the strongest on record — and slammed into the coastal region of Gujarat, already one of the areas hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic, uprooting trees, felling power lines and destroying homes and crops. More than 200,000 people were evacuated from their homes in the western state of Gujarat. Hundreds of COVID-19 patients were also shifted from coastal wards in Mumbai to other hospitals farther inland.

Only a year ago, during the first wave of SARS-CoV-2, West Bengal was battered by Amphan, formed over the Bay of Bengal on the East coast of India. Right after that Cyclone Nisarga devastated Maharashtra on west coast, followed by Nivar that hit Puducherry on the east coast. In the last four years, pre-monsoon cyclones over the Arabian Sea have become common.

The Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal have been heating up due to climate change. The intensity of Tauktae is directly related to the Arabian Sea becoming a warm pool, at 30-31 degree Celsius. The frequency of cyclones we are witnessing in the eastern and western coasts can be correlated. Scientifically.

India is already feeling the costs of climate change, with many cities reporting temperatures above 48 degrees in 2020 and a billion people facing severe water scarcity for at least a month of the year. If action is not taken to cut emissions enough to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the human and economic toll will rise even higher. India may lose 3-10 percent of its annual GDP by the end of the century as a result of climate change, according to a recent paper, 'The costs of climate change in India,' by Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

As the pandemic continues to rage, particularly among developing nations most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, negotiators will need to achieve tangible progress going forward during the three-week of virtual SBs.