



A Rare Tropical Cyclone Senyar

Tropical cyclone Senyar on November 24–28, 2025

This tropical cyclone Senyar was unusual because it formed near the equator where cyclones rarely develop. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the cyclone originated over the Bay of Bengal and initially developed from a low-pressure area near the Strait of Malacca and the southern Andaman Sea. It gradually strengthened over several days before intensifying into a severe cyclone on November 26. The Strait of Malacca has not seen a cyclone formation of this disaster in decades.

Normally, the Coriolis effect, which is the deflection of moving air caused by Earth's rotation, prevents storms from forming near the equator. In the northern Hemisphere, air is deflected to the right, while in the southern Hemisphere, it is deflected to the left, creating the curved motion needed for cyclonic rotation. Near the equator, however, the Coriolis effect is too weak for storms to develop the organized rotation required to become a cyclone. This makes cyclone Senyar's formation particularly unusual.

On November 25–26, the cyclone made a sharp U-turn and moved toward east Malaysia. Its slow passage over the mountainous terrain of Sumatra resulted in extreme rainfall, with some areas receiving nearly 400 mm. According to the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS), the cyclone produced maximum wind speeds of 83 km/h, around 1.5 meters of storm surge, and widespread rainfall across Indonesia and Malaysia.

The cyclone severely affected Sumatra Island and northwestern Indonesia, triggering flooding and landslides. According to estimates from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than 10.8 million people in the region were affected, and over 1.2 million were displaced.

Damage and losses

Impact on the affected area

The IMD reported that the cyclone brought heavy rainfall and strong winds to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Andhra Pradesh, and nearby coastal regions, resulting in flooding and landslides. Humanitarian impacts were also severe, including several fatalities, missing persons, thousands of evacuees, and extensive damage to buildings across the provinces of north Sumatra, west Sumatra, and Aceh. The worst conditions were recorded in Sibolga (north Sumatra), the Tapanuli region, and Mandailing Natal. Significant sediment discharge into the sea along the northern coast indicated widespread river overflow due to intense upstream rainfall, particularly in Aceh province, Indonesia.

Agricultural devastation

Agricultural land:

- Malaysia: Less effects of this disaster situation, only Sungai Besar Selangor province was reported.
- Indonesia: No official reports regarding crop damage have been released yet.

Affected crops:

- Malaysia: No reports regarding crop damage due to no planting crops during this period.
- Indonesia: No reports regarding crop damage have been released yet.

Government responses and countermeasures

Some foreign aid has been provided, including assistance from Malaysia, which sent medical supplies to Aceh Province. Officers and police personnel were deployed urgently to help affected communities and restore order in the impacted areas. International support also included an offer from Elon Musk to provide free Starlink services to help restore communications during the emergency.

Priority relief efforts focused on search and rescue operations, addressing the basic needs of displaced communities, restoring access to isolated areas, and accelerating the distribution of relief supplies by both land and air. Meanwhile, the Government of Malaysia is leading the overall response, closely monitoring the situation and issuing regular updates and advisories.

Sources:

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