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TOP STORY • GEOGRAPHY AND SCIENCE

Off Course and Out of Fuel: Why Cyclone Akvan Hit Odisha Weaker Than Feared

The storm turned north, crossed the coast near Gopalpur hours early and faded over land, after 3.72 lakh people moved to shelters.

Written and fact-checked by AI · News Pebbles

Cyclone Akvan, a storm from the Bay of Bengal, crossed the south Odisha coast near Gopalpur between 7.30 and 8.30 am on Friday 20 November, with winds gusting up to 90 km an hour.

That was not where forecasters had first pointed. Earlier guidance from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) expected landfall farther south in Andhra Pradesh, around midday. Instead Akvan changed course and came ashore farther north, several hours early and weaker.

It had lost strength on the way, falling one step on the IMD's scale overnight. Land finished the job: a cyclone's basic fuel is warm, moist air from the ocean, and over land that supply is cut off. Akvan became a deep depression inland.

Weaker does not mean harmless. Gopalpur measured 180.4 mm of rain in 24 hours, and forecasters warned of a storm surge of up to 1 metre. Odisha had already moved about 3.72 lakh people into nearly 10,000 shelters, and the state's chief secretary, Anu Garg, said there were "no reports of casualties or major damage" so far.

Ports had their own warning system. They fly numbered danger signals for ships, and Gopalpur raised Great Danger Signal 10 while Paradip raised Signal 9. Among those sheltered were 4,470 pregnant women; 1,450 of them have since given birth, and the mothers and newborns are safe. With the IMD warning of heavy rain for another day, red alerts for extremely heavy rain covered parts of both states.



Akvan came ashore on India's east coast, farther north than earlier guidance for a landfall in Andhra Pradesh.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Early warnings and large evacuations are how India keeps coastal families safe from cyclones, even when a storm changes track at the last minute.

WORLD • CIVICS AND HISTORY

What Shenzhen's Joint Statement Said, and the War It Never Mentioned

Trump, Xi and Putin spoke of UN reform, more oil and gas and avoiding nuclear war. Ukraine was not on the page or in the room.

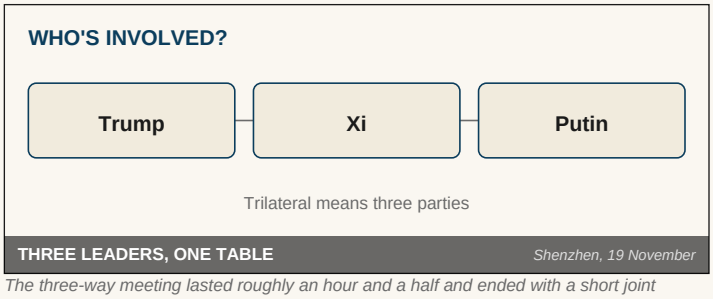
Three countries that each hold a permanent seat on the UN Security Council sent their leaders into one room on Thursday 19 November. At Kylin Villa in Shenzhen, next to Hong Kong, Donald Trump, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin met as a trio for the first time, during the APEC summit, for roughly 90 minutes.

Their short joint statement touched four subjects a civics class would recognise. On the UN, the three backed reform. On energy, they promised to pump more oil and gas. On international law, they warned the International Criminal Court, which can try individuals for war crimes, and similar bodies against abusing their powers. On weapons, they agreed nobody can win a nuclear war and one must never be unleashed.

Missing from the page was Ukraine. The war there, which began with Russia's invasion more than four years ago, got no mention, and no new peace plan was offered. Citing Ukraine's strike on the Kerch Bridge between Russia and Crimea, Putin refused to negotiate with Kyiv for now and argued that Ukraine and Europe were "not yet ready" to compromise.

Kyiv had objected in advance. Before the summit, Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, called it a "huge mistake" for big powers to make decisions about smaller nations without them, and his foreign minister, Andrii Sybiha, has insisted no decisions can be made without Ukraine.

Reviews of the day split sharply. Putin called it a "useful format" worth repeating and said he might travel to the G20 summit in Miami in December. Andrius Tursa, an analyst at Teneo, judged it "arguably a diplomatic victory for Moscow."



The three-way meeting lasted roughly an hour and a half and ended with a short joint statement.

CONNECT THE DOTS

Civics: the three leaders spoke as permanent members of the UN Security Council, the body charged with keeping world peace. History: Zelensky's warning, that big powers should not decide for smaller nations without them, echoes debates about earlier great-power summits, such as Yalta in 1945.

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INDIA • GEOGRAPHY

Missile Ranges and Undersea Cables: India and Japan Widen Their Ties in Tokyo

At their fourth "2+2" talks, the two countries agreed on joint training, defence research and safer supply chains.

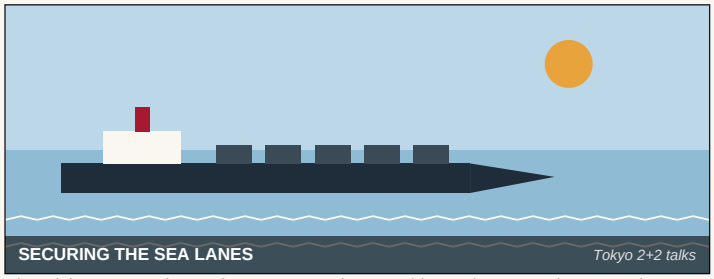
India and Japan each sent two ministers to the same table in Tokyo on Thursday 19 November. The format is called a "2+2": India's foreign minister S. Jaishankar and defence minister Rajnath Singh met Japan's foreign minister Toshimitsu Motegi and defence minister Shinjiro Koizumi for 90 minutes. It was the fourth round; the third was held in New Delhi on 20 August 2024.

The most unusual result involves military training. Under a letter of intent, India will open its firing ranges to live-fire training by Japan's Self-Defense Forces, including surface-to-ship missiles. IntelliNews reported that Japanese forces will fire missiles on Indian ranges for the first time. India's defence research agency, DRDO, and Japan's defence technology agency, ATLA, will also begin joint research on missiles and other advanced technology.

Equipment is starting to move between the two countries as well. The UNICORN project, Japanese-designed antenna masts for Indian Navy warships, was described as the first defence equipment transfer project between them, under a "Design with Japan, Make in India" label. Tokyo expects India to grant a key approval, called Acceptance of Necessity, by February 2027.

Supply chains, the routes that carry parts and materials around the world, were the other big theme. The ministers agreed on project-by-project cooperation in semiconductors, critical minerals, clean energy, information technology and medicines. They also agreed to work on secure undersea cables in the Indo-Pacific, the ocean region that runs from the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific. Their joint statement voiced "grave concern" about economic coercion and arbitrary export restrictions without naming any country.

Jaishankar described the worry behind that phrase as a growing tendency to "weaponise" connectivity, resources and supply chains. The economic ties behind the talks are large: India-Japan trade was about $27.5 billion in 2025-26, and Tokyo has pledged to invest 10 trillion yen, about $62.5 billion, in India over a decade. Each country supports the other's bid for a permanent seat on a reformed UN Security Council. The next 2+2 will be held in India, and in 2027 the two mark 75 years of diplomatic relations.



The ministers agreed to work on secure undersea cables and sea security across the Indo-Pacific.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Chips, minerals and undersea cables carry the modern economy, and India and Japan want supply lines that no single country can easily squeeze.

UNITED STATES • CIVICS

A 1973 Law Meets the Iran War: Senate Rejects a Pullout by 48-51

In Congress's first war vote since the midterms, three Republicans voted to withdraw US forces and one Democrat voted against.

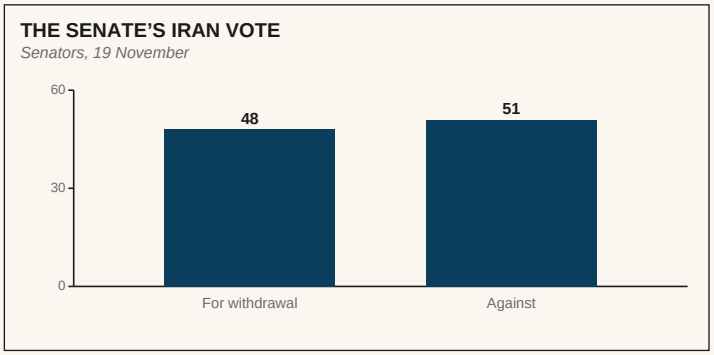
Who gets to decide whether America keeps fighting a war? Under the Constitution, Congress and the President share that authority. On Thursday 19 November senators were asked to use their half: a resolution told the president to pull US forces out of hostilities with Iran. It failed, 48 votes to 51, after the House had approved it in mid-September.

Behind the vote sits a law passed during the Vietnam War era. On 7 November 1973 Congress overrode President Richard Nixon's veto to pass the War Powers Resolution. A president must tell Congress within 48 hours of sending forces into hostilities, and must end their use after 60 days unless Congress gives permission.

The roll call crossed party lines in both directions. Three Republicans, Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski and Rand Paul, backed the pullout; Democrat John Fetterman opposed it. So did Republican Thom Tillis, who had supported an earlier attempt. He said this one "doesn't go to the president, so it's just a statement from Congress."

Tillis was pointing to a detail of lawmaking. A concurrent resolution never reaches the president's desk, so passing it would have been largely symbolic. Democrat Tim Kaine said the elections on 3 November had shown how unpopular the war is.

The next test may be about money rather than words. By 13 November the war, which began in late February, had cost at least $48.3 billion, without counting damage to US bases. Lawmakers need a funding bill to keep the government open after 11 December, and some Democrats are weighing whether to cut off war funding then or wait until they take control of Congress in January.



The resolution to remove US forces from hostilities with Iran failed 48-51. The House had passed it in mid-September.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Constitution splits war powers between Congress and the President, and this vote shows that balance is still argued over, not just studied in civics class.

THINK LIKE AN ANALYST

Why might a senator who opposes a war still vote against a resolution that could not become law? What would change if Congress used its control of funding instead? Which evidence would show whether voters' views on the war shaped the vote?

SCIENCE & TECH • ASTRONOMY

Dragged to Its Doom: Astronomers Watch a Giant Star Swallow Its Partner

In the Andromeda galaxy, a small star spiralled through a giant's outer gas, and the giant brightened for seven years before it erupted.

Astronomers have pieced together, step by step, how a small star spiralled into a giant one. The study, published in the journal Nature on 18 November and led by Viraj Karambelkar of Columbia University, follows a pair of stars in the Andromeda galaxy, about 2.5 million light-years from Earth. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, so the light from these stars set out on its journey to Earth about 2.5 million years ago.

The two stars were very unequal. The giant, nicknamed Big Bao, has about seven times the Sun's mass and is 350 times as wide; its partner, Little Bao, had about 70% of the Sun's mass. Officially, the event is called AT 2025abao.

The physics behind it is a kind of drag. Little Bao orbited inside Big Bao's outer layers of gas, and that gas pushed back against it. The drag made the small star spiral inward and hand its energy to the gas, and some of that energy escaped as light. Astronomers call this process common-envelope evolution.

The extra light gave the pair away. For seven years from 2018 the giant grew brighter and swelled to more than twice its original size, then erupted in October 2025. Many telescopes shared the watch: NEOWISE first flagged a change in February 2023, the Zwicky Transient Facility detected the eruption on 17 October 2025, and NASA's James Webb Space Telescope observed the system on 24 December 2025.

The team estimates that only about a tenth of the giant's outer gas escaped in the eruption, and the energy of that fast-moving gas suggests the small star reached the giant's core. Karambelkar said he was "absolutely flabbergasted" when the team saw it. "Catching a star engulfing its companion in the act is very difficult," he added.

The answer is not yet certain. Karambelkar notes that both stars might instead have survived in a much tighter orbit, and dust blocks a direct view of what remains. The system will take years or decades to settle, and the researchers plan to search for similar pairs, hoping to catch them before they erupt.

HOW A GIANT STAR SWALLOWS A PARTNER

1. The small star orbits inside the giant's outer layers of gas
2. Drag from the gas makes it spiral inward
3. Energy handed to the gas escapes as light
4. The giant brightens for years, then erupts

Reconstructed from telescope observations; both stars may instead have survived in a much tighter orbit.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Physics lessons on drag and energy apply even to stars, and catching this merger in the act helps astronomers learn how pairs of stars change over their lives.

ECONOMY • ENERGY

A $1.6 Trillion Bill: The IEA Calls Hormuz the Biggest Energy Shock in History

The energy watchdog says imported oil and gas will cost 25% more this year, and countries are switching to power made at home.

Look at a map of the Middle East and find the narrow channel where the Persian Gulf opens into the Gulf of Oman. That is the Strait of Hormuz. On 19 November the International Energy Agency (IEA), in its yearly World Energy Outlook, named the crisis there the largest energy supply shock in history.

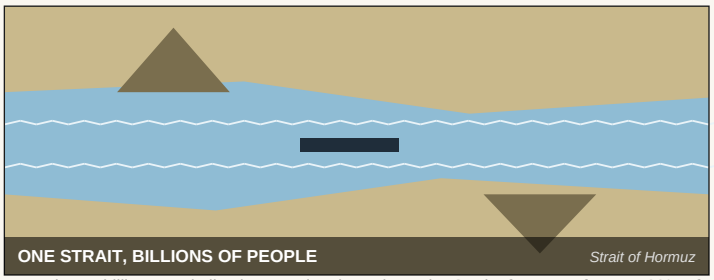
The size of the shock follows from that geography. Before the crisis, roughly 20 million barrels of oil passed through the strait each day, and today more than 4 billion people live in countries that get over 30% of their oil through it. By November, the IEA counts 2.8 billion barrels of oil and 60 billion cubic metres of gas knocked out of Gulf supply.

For households, lost supply turns into a bigger bill. The agency projects countries will pay $1.6 trillion for imported oil and gas in 2026, a quarter more than in 2025. In developing economies, it warns, pricier and scarcer fuel risks slowing the spread of electricity and clean cooking.

Prices may not stay high. Oil cargoes through Hormuz are back to about their pre-war volume, and on Friday Brent, a benchmark crude, slipped to $90.33 a barrel, on track for its third weekly decline in a row. The IEA expects 1.7 million more barrels a day to be produced than used in the final quarter of 2026. Still, in September US diesel reached its highest nominal price on record, says the US Energy Information Administration.

Politics is trying to steer the market too. After meeting in Shenzhen, the leaders of the US, China and Russia said they plan to increase the production and supply of refined fuels, but did not say how. Hamad Hussain of Capital Economics said the pledge should be treated as "political noise." The oil producers' group OPEC+ meets from 29 November to set its output for 2027.

The longer story is a shift in where energy comes from. IEA head Fatih Birol sees no "credible pathway" back to the old energy world. If shipping stays risky, Hormuz could carry just 8.5 million barrels a day by 2030 and fewer than 2 million by 2035; if the conflict clearly ends, a rebound in supply could create a buyer's market with lower prices. Electricity is set to rise from 23% of final energy use in 2025 to nearly 30% by 2035, with renewables led by solar making 45-50% of power, against about a third now. Nearly 90 GW of new nuclear capacity was being built as of mid-2026, the most in over 35 years.



More than 4 billion people live in countries that rely on the Strait of Hormuz for over 30% of their oil.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Fuel bills reach every household, and the IEA warns that higher prices risk slowing access to electricity and clean cooking in developing economies.

ONE-LINE BRIEFS

• Poland: Two Russian missiles and a jet-powered drone came down inside Poland, an EU and NATO member, during one of Russia's biggest attacks on Ukraine; no one in Poland was hurt, and Prime Minister Donald Tusk called it a provocation.

• Climate: At the COP31 summit in Antalya, Turkey, a new nine-page draft deal contains no explicit reference to fossil fuels, and negotiators expected the talks, due to end on Friday, to run into Saturday.

• Florida: Record November rains flooded the Space Coast, where the St. Johns River near Cocoa rose above its 1953 record flood level and first responders made nearly 100 high-water rescues.

• Space: ISRO is aiming for December to launch G1, the first uncrewed test flight of India's Gaganyaan programme, carrying the half-humanoid robot Vyommitra instead of astronauts.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

Words that unlock today's news

Landfall
The moment a storm's centre moves from the sea onto land. Today: Cyclone Akvan made landfall near Gopalpur, farther north than first forecast.

Storm surge
A rise in sea level pushed ashore by a storm's winds. Today: forecasters warned of a 0.5 to 1 metre surge in Ganjam and Puri.

Economic coercion
Using trade, money or supplies to pressure another country. Today: India and Japan voiced "grave concern" about it without naming a country.

Light-year
The distance light travels in one year, used to measure space. Today: the star pair in the Andromeda galaxy is about 2.5 million light-years away.

DID YOU KNOW?

Cyclones north of the equator, including those over the Bay of Bengal, spin anticlockwise, while those south of the equator spin clockwise, because Earth's rotation deflects the air flowing in toward the storm's centre.

EXPLAINER

How the IMD grades a storm

The India Meteorological Department sorts storms over the north Indian Ocean by their strongest steady wind. A depression has winds of 31 to 49 km an hour and a deep depression 50 to 61. From 62 to 88 km an hour a storm is a cyclonic storm. Higher up the ladder come severe and then very severe cyclonic storms (118 to 166 km an hour), and at 222 km an hour and above, a super cyclonic storm.

Akvan travelled down this ladder. Earlier guidance expected a very severe cyclonic storm; it was severe until Thursday night, a cyclonic storm with winds of 70 to 80 km an hour at landfall, and a deep depression once it moved inland. Each step down means weaker winds, but heavy rain and storm surges can still flood land at every level. That is why the IMD issues separate warnings for wind, rain and surge, and why ports raise numbered danger signals, such as Great Danger Signal 10 at Gopalpur, to tell ships how serious the threat is.

QUIZ

Five questions on this issue

1. Near which town did Cyclone Akvan cross the Odisha coast?

(a) Puri (b) Gopalpur (c) Visakhapatnam

2. What did the Shenzhen joint statement leave out?

(a) UN reform (b) Nuclear war (c) The war in Ukraine

3. What will India open to Japan's Self-Defense Forces?

(a) Its firing ranges (b) Its space station (c) Its ports for fishing

4. In which year did Congress pass the War Powers Resolution?

(a) 1945 (b) 1973 (c) 2001

5. How much does the IEA project the world will spend on imported oil and gas in 2026?

(a) $1.6 trillion (b) $160 billion (c) $16 trillion

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-a, 4-b, 5-a.

DISCUSS

DISCUSS

Odisha moved about 3.72 lakh people into shelters even though Akvan changed course, arrived early and weakened before landfall. How should a government weigh the cost of moving so many families, closing schools and cancelling trains against the risk that a forecast turns out to be wrong? Would your answer change if the storm had grown stronger instead?

Zelensky said major powers should not decide things about smaller nations without them, while Putin called the three-way talks a useful format. Can a meeting of three leaders shape the future of countries that were not invited? Think of examples from history class. If you were advising Ukraine, would you rather be at a table like Shenzhen's with little power, or stay away and object from outside?

The Constitution splits authority over the military between Congress and the President, and the War Powers Resolution sets a 60-day limit. Which branch do you think should have the final say on keeping troops in a war, and why? Is controlling the money a fairer way for Congress to act than passing a resolution? What might each side say about who answers to voters?

"There can be no winners in a nuclear war." — Joint statement of the US, China and Russia, Shenzhen

You are not just reading the news — you are learning to think about it. See you next week.