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### 1. How Watermelon became a Palestinian symbol

#### Why in News?

Actor Kani Kusruti posed with a watermelon clutch at the Cannes Film Festival. Amidst Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza, this is being viewed as an expression of solidarity with Palestinians, with the humble watermelon long considered a symbol of their struggle.



Palestine Flag

#### Why watermelon

A watermelon when sliced shows the colours of the Palestinian flag — red, green, black, and white. This makes it a useful symbol of Palestinian identity, especially since carrying and displaying the Palestinian flag has often been barred by Israeli authorities. On social media too the watermelon emoji has gained currency, with many claiming that posts with more overt Palestinian symbols are restricted by the US-headquartered tech platforms.

Notably, watermelons are widely cultivated in Palestine, from the West Bank to Gaza, and feature prominently in Palestinian cuisine.

#### Symbol of protest

Palestine has been on the boil since last year, even before the October 7 Hamas attack that triggered the bloodbath in Gaza by Israel. Flowing the Palestinian flag is not legally banned in Israel, but the police often crack down, claiming the flag could "disturb peace".

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 2. RBI approves ₹2.11-lakh crore surplus bonanza to Govt for FY24

### Introduction

The Reserve Bank of India's central board of directors declared a bonanza to the Central Government, approving a massive, all-time high surplus transfer of ₹2,10,874 crore for FY24.

### Impact

This bumper surplus transfer could help the government either borrow less in FY25 or step up capital expenditure. If the government borrows less, government security (G-Sec) yields could soften, thereby lowering its borrowing cost.

### Previous surplus transfer

The previous highest surplus transfer was ₹1,76,051 crore in 2018-19. The surplus transfer in FY24 is 2.41 times the previous year's ₹87,416 crore. It is also much higher than both the budgeted and street estimates of ₹1-lakh crore surplus.

### Reason for high surplus

Economists attributed the higher-than-anticipated surplus to higher interest income, led by an increase in both global and domestic yields. There were also revaluation gains on forex reserves.

### RBI Statement

In a statement, the RBI said that during accounting years 2018-19 to 2021-22, owing to the prevailing macroeconomic conditions and the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board had decided to maintain the risk provisioning under the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) at 5.50 per cent of the Reserve Bank's Balance Sheet size to support growth and overall economic activity.

With the revival in economic growth in FY23, the CRB was increased to 6 per cent. As the economy remains robust and resilient, the Board has decided to increase the CRB to 6.50 per cent for FY24.

The Board thereafter approved the transfer of ₹2,10,874 crore as surplus to the Central Government for the accounting year 2023-24.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Hindu Business Line

## 3. Cyclone Remal to hit Bengal: How and why are cyclones named?

### Introduction

Cyclone Remal will likely make landfall between West Bengal's Sagar Island and Bangladesh's Khepupara, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. It will be the first pre monsoon tropical cyclone on the Bay of Bengal this year.

The name Remal, meaning 'sand' in Arabic, was chosen by Oman, and assigned according to the standard convention of naming tropical cyclones in the region. Why does Oman, on the Arabian Sea, get to choose the name of a cyclone in the Bay of Bengal? And why are cyclones named, in the first place?

### List of 169 cyclone names

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) is a 185-member strong United Nations agency. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is a regional commission under the jurisdiction of the UN Economic and Social Council, formed to increase economic activity in Asia and the Far East.

Realising the importance of an effective cyclone warning and disaster mitigation in the North Indian Ocean region (comprising both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal), WMO came together in 1972 to establish the Panel on Tropical Cyclones (PTC). The PTC originally comprised eight member countries — Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Sultanate of Oman and Thailand.

Place	List 1	List 2	List 3	List 4	List 5	List 6	List 7	List 8	List 9	List 10	List 11	List 12	List 13
Bangladesh	Nisarga	Biparjoy	Arnab	Upakul	Barshon	Rajani	Nishith	Urmi	Meghala	Samiron	Pratikul	Sarobor	Mahanisha
India	Gati	Tej	Murasu	Aag	Vyom	Jhar	Probaho	Neer	Prabhanjan	Ghurni	Ambud	Jaladhi	Vega
Iran	Nivar	Hamoon	Akvan	Sepand	Booran	Anahita	Azar	Pooyan	Arsham	Hengame	Savas	Tahamtan	Toofan
Maldives	Burevi	Midhili	Kaani	Odi	Kenau	Endheri	Riyau	Guruva	Kurangi	Kuredhi	Horangu	Thundi	Faana
Myanmar	Tauktae	Michaung	Ngamann	Kyarhit	Sapakye	Wetwun	Mwaihout	Kywe	Pinku	Yinkaung	Linyone	Kyeekan	Bautphat
Oman	Yaas	Remal	Sail	Naseem	Muzn	Sadeem	Dima	Manjour	Rukam	Watad	Al-jarz	Rabab	Raad
Pakistan	Gulab	Asna	Sahab	Afshan	Manahil	Shujana	Parwaz	Zannata	Sarsar	Badban	Sarrab	Gulnar	Waseq
Qatar	Shaheen	Dana	Lulu	Mouj	Suhail	Sadaf	Reem	Rayhan	Anbar	Oud	Bahar	Seef	Fanar
Saudi Arabia	Jawad	Fengal	Ghazeer	Asif	Sidrah	Hareed	Faid	Kaseer	Nakheel	Haboob	Bareq	Alreem	Wabil
Sri Lanka	Asani	Shakhti	Gigum	Gagana	Verambha	Garjana	Neeba	Ninnada	Viduli	Ogha	Salitha	Rivi	Rudu
Thailand	Sitrang	Montha	Thianyot	Bulan	Phutala	Aiyara	Saming	Kraison	Matcha	Mahingsa	Phraewa	Asuri	Thara
United Arab Emirates	Mandous	Senyar	Afoor	Nahhaam	Quffal	Daaman	Deem	Gargoor	Khubb	Degl	Athmad	Boom	Saffar
Yemen	Mocha	Ditwah	Diksam	Sira	Bakhr	Ghwyzi	Hawf	Balhaf	Brom	Shuqra	Fartak	Darsah	Samhah

In its twenty-seventh session held in 2000 in Muscat, Oman, the PTC agreed to assign names to the tropical cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. After each country in the panel sent its recommendations, the PTC finalised its list and started naming cyclones in the region in 2004. The PTC, in 2018, expanded to include Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

In April 2020, a list of 169 cyclone names were released — 13 suggestions each from the 13 countries. It is this list that is currently being used to name cyclones.

### How the naming convention works

There are some basic guidelines that countries needed to follow while sending in their proposals. These include ensuring that the proposed name

- is neutral to (a) politics and political figures (b) religious beliefs, (c) cultures and (d) gender;
- does not hurt the sentiments of any group of population over the globe;
- is not very rude and cruel in nature;
- is short, easy to pronounce, and not offensive to any PTC member;
- is at most eight letters long;
- is provided with its pronunciation and voice over; and
- is not repeated (not before, not after).

The list of proposed names arranges the countries in alphabetical order, and lists all the names suggested by them alongside. Then these names are allotted to any cyclone, which takes place in the region, on a rotational basis regardless of which country proposed it.

For instance, the first cyclone after the list was named Nisarga (Bangladesh's name choice), which hit Maharashtra, followed by Gati (India's choice, hit Somalia), Nivar (Iran's choice, hit Tamil Nadu), and so on.

After all the names of one column are exhausted, i.e. one name suggested by each country has been used, names from the next column are chosen, again starting from Bangladesh (for instance, after Mocha, the next cyclone was named Biparjoy).

After this list is exhausted (which might take more than a decade, maybe even decades), a new list will be submitted by PTC members.

### **Why name cyclones at all?**

Adopting names for cyclones makes it easier for people to remember, as opposed to numbers and technical terms. Apart from the general public, it also helps the scientific community, the media, disaster managers etc. With a name, it is easy to identify individual cyclones, create awareness of its development, rapidly disseminate warnings to increase community preparedness and remove confusion where there are multiple cyclonic systems over a region. Other regions of the world have similar naming conventions for tropical storms.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Disaster Management

Source: Indian Express