

# Delay looms as Canada, Australia quit

IOC and Japan promise decision on Olympics within a month; athletes worry about health risks

## TOKYO 2020

REUTERS  
TOKYO

Major sporting nations Australia and Canada withdrew from the Tokyo 2020 Olympics on Monday, and Britain threatened to follow suit, as organisers faced global pressure to postpone the Games due to the coronavirus crisis for the first time in its 124-year modern history.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Japanese government had on Sunday and Monday slightly shifted their position that the Games would start as planned on July 24, announcing a month-long consultation over other "scenarios".

That was not sufficient for the Canadians or Australians, who said they would not be participating if the Games was not pushed back to 2021.

Putting back the July 24-Aug. 9 event, as is looking inevitable, would be a massive blow for host Japan which has pumped in more than \$12 billion of investment. Huge sums are also at stake for sponsors and broadcasters.

### Tippling the balance

But a groundswell of concern from athletes – already struggling to train as gyms, stadiums and swimming



**Time running out:** With the coronavirus crisis escalating and just four months to go for the start, organisers and IOC are bracing themselves to take a call on deferring the event. •AP

pools close around the world – appears to be tipping the balance, along with the cancellation of other major sports events.

Canada and Australia both bluntly said they would not participate if the Games were not put back to 2021.

"We are in the midst of a global health crisis that is far more significant than sport," said Canada's Olympic Committee (COC) and Paralympic Committee (CPC) in a statement.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau welcomed the move saying "I know this is heartbreaking for so many

people – athletes, coaches, staff, and fans – but this was absolutely the right call. And everyone should follow their lead."

"Our athletes have been magnificent in their positive attitude to training and preparing, but the stress and uncertainty have been extremely challenging for them," said Australia's Olympic Chief de Mission Ian Chesterman.

Russia urged global sporting authorities to avoid "panic" over the Olympics and U.S. President Donald Trump expressed confidence in Japan's government

to make the "proper" call. But a raft of other nations pressed for a quick decision from the IOC.

Monday's announcements followed growing pressure from big stakeholders including U.S. Track and Field and other national Olympic committees.

"An Olympic Games in July this year is neither feasible nor desirable," World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe said. "We owe it to our athletes to give them respite where we can."

Later, World Athletics said it was prepared to shift the World Championships in

2021 in order to accommodate a potential move of the Olympic Games.

### Change in stance

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told parliament on Monday postponing the Olympics may become an option if holding the Games in its "complete form" became impossible. "If that becomes difficult, we may have no option but to consider postponing the Games, given the Olympic principle of putting the health of athletes first," he said.

Abe also said calling off the Games entirely was not an option, echoing the IOC position.

### Scaling back torch relay

The organising committee was already scaling back the torch relay to avoid crowds, NHK broadcaster said.

Tokyo 2020 Olympics chief Yoshiro Mori said organisers would consider postponement as one of the many scenarios they aim to have ready in the next four weeks. But finding a new date could be complicated as the summer 2021 calendar is already crowded, while 2022 will see the FIFA World Cup and the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Postponement could be a major blow to the IOC's prestige after weeks of saying the Games would go ahead as planned.

## IOA, ministry to assess situation

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the Sports Ministry are likely to assess India's preparations for the 2020 Olympics and also the possibility of participating in the Games some time this week after a series of meetings and interactions with the IOC.

"I am personally in touch with the Sports Ministry, SAI, IOC, National Sports Federations and all stakeholders regarding the preparations for the Tokyo Olympics. NOCs have to get back to the IOC this week on their preparations and health of athletes," IOA president Narinder Batra said on Monday.

"All international federations had a video conference with IOC president Thomas Bach on March 17 and all 206 NOCs two days later to discuss COVID-19 and the Olympics. We are clear that there will be no compromise on the health and safety of athletes," Batra, who is also an IOC member and president of the International Hockey Federation (FIH), added.

As of now the Indian hockey teams (men and women), track & field athletes and weightlifters are in National camps at SAI centres training under strict control.

## The Games can wait, says Usha

'Human lives are more precious than anything in sport'

STAN RYAN  
KOCHI

She was training in London for the 1986 Commonwealth Games when news broke that India would boycott the event in Edinburgh. Naturally, P.T. Usha was shattered.

"The Games were just a few days away and I was very disappointed, I was in very good form then and expected two golds – in the 400m and 400m hurdles. And, I had trained very hard for months in London," said Usha in a telephonic chat with *The Hindu* on Monday.

India had pulled out in protest against Britain's stand on South Africa's apartheid policy. A month later, at the Seoul Asian Games in September, Usha went on to win four golds and a silver.

"Of course, the current situation is different... one can understand the uncertainty over this year's Tokyo Olympics because of the coronavirus pandemic. Human lives are much more precious than anything in sport," said Usha, the Golden Girl of Asian athletics in the '80s.

"The Olympics can wait. When you see the happenings around you, especially the situation in Italy, where thousands of lives have been lost, you feel so emotional.



P.T. Usha. •FILE PHOTO

"We are staying positive, hoping that this will go away soon. We are happy that efforts are being made here to ensure the deadly virus does not reach the third stage," she said.

Usha feels having the Olympics in mid-2021 would be ideal.

"The Olympics is not something we should be in a hurry to have, even if there are a couple of positive coronavirus cases in the Games, if they are held this year-end, they will have a huge negative impact."

Swimming (in Fukuoka, Japan, July 16-Aug. 1) and athletics (Eugene, US, Aug. 6-15) will have their respective World championships next year and Usha feels that this 2021 July-August period could be used to have the Olympics instead.

## Staging of IPL-13 remains in the realm of uncertainty

A review meeting scheduled for Tuesday indefinitely deferred

### CRICKET

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

With the COVID-19 pandemic spreading all over the country, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has indefinitely deferred a review meeting to explore the possibility of staging the 13th edition of the IPL.

A day after suspending IPL-2020 till April 15, the BCCI office-bearers had a meeting with franchise owners in Mumbai on March 14, which was followed by the IPL governing council meeting.

BCCI chief Sourav Ganguly, while indicating that "a curtailed IPL" was the only option, had mentioned that the next review meeting would be on March 24.

Brijesh Patel, chairman, IPL governing council, told *The Hindu* on Monday that "no meeting is scheduled" for Tuesday since there's "not much to discuss about IPL" at the moment.

A franchise executive ad-

mitted that the "IPL is the last thing on everyone's mind" with the coronavirus crisis worsening.

### Good as gone?

Despite the BCCI hoping against hope to stage the IPL in some form before the window, which can be stretched to May 31, ends, Board and franchise sources indicated that the possibility of the tournament taking off this year was remote.

The decision on calling off the season is unlikely to be taken any time before the second week of April.

At the moment, the States where the franchises are based – Delhi, Punjab, Kolkata, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu – are under partial or complete lockdown. With the number of cases increasing, the situation appears grim.

Just like China, the authorities are understood to be exploring the possibility of converting sports stadia into quarantine wards if the number of patients keeps escalating.

## COVID-19 IMPACT



### Chhetri in FIFA's 'Pass the message to kick out coronavirus' campaign

NEW DELHI  
Sunil Chhetri, Indian football's talisman, was on Monday picked among 28 past and present stars for FIFA's campaign to combat COVID-19. The 'Pass the message to kick out coronavirus' campaign

includes Argentine superstar Lionel Messi and World Cup winners like Philip Lahm, Iker Casillas and Carles Puyol. FIFA president Gianni Infantino said: "We need teamwork to combat the coronavirus. I call upon the football community worldwide to join us in supporting this campaign to pass the message even further." PTI

### NBA's Gobert details effects of the virus

LOS ANGELES  
Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert, whose positive coronavirus test prompted the NBA to shut



down its season, says the virus has caused him to lose his sense of smell. "Just to give you guys an update, loss of smell and taste is definitely one of the symptoms, haven't been able to smell anything for the last 4 days," Gobert wrote on Twitter. "Anyone experiencing the same thing?" Days before his positive test, Gobert had shrugged off safety measures aimed at limiting the spread of the virus, pointedly touching every microphone and voice recorder on a table in front of him at a media interaction. AFP

### UEFA postpones major tournament finals

NYON  
UEFA announced on Monday that it had postponed the Champions League, Europa League and women's Champions League finals, originally scheduled for May, due to the pandemic. European football's governing

body had already postponed the competitions until further notice earlier this month. UEFA said "no decision has yet been made on rearranged dates". Meanwhile, professional football in Spain will remain suspended until further notice to limit the spread of the virus, said La Liga and the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF). AFP

### Gambhir pledges 50 lakh for treatment equipment

NEW DELHI  
Cricketer-turned politician Gautam Gambhir on Monday pledged ₹50 lakh towards COVID-19 treatment. In a letter to Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, he wrote: "I would like to pledge 50 lakh from my MPLAD fund for equipment that may be needed for COVID-19 treatment in State government hospitals." He also advocated jail terms for the offenders who break quarantine. PTI



### Safety first for Sangakkara

COLOMBO  
Sri Lankan batting great Kumar Sangakkara has said he is currently in self-quarantine, following his government's

guidelines for those recently returning from Europe. "I have no symptoms or anything like that, but I'm following government guidelines," Sangakkara told *News First*. "I arrived from London over a week ago and the first thing was there was a news bulletin saying that anyone who had travelled from Europe within March 1 to 15 should register themselves with the police and undergo self quarantine. I registered myself with the police," the former captain said. PTI

### Azerbaijan GP off; no F1 race until mid-June

BAKU  
The Azerbaijan Grand Prix was postponed on Monday, delaying the start of the Formula One season until the middle of June at the earliest. The first eight races of the 2020 season have now been either postponed or cancelled because of the virus. "This comes as a direct result of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic and has been based entirely on the expert guidance provided to us by the relevant authorities," the organisers said. They said a new race date would be announced later. AP



### Coronavirus 'no joke', warns van der Burgh

LOS ANGELES  
Olympic champion swimmer Cameron van der Burgh, who contracted COVID-19, offered an insight into how it left him weak and devastated. "Any physical activity like walking leaves me exhausted for hours. Please, look after yourself everyone! COVID-19 is no joke!" AFP

### Pathan brothers do their bit by donating masks

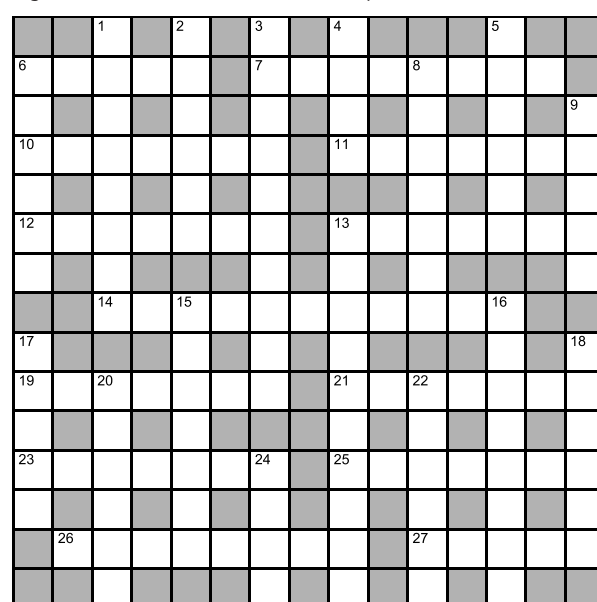
VADODARA  
In a humanitarian gesture, former India cricketers Irfan Pathan and his brother Yusuf have donated 4,000 masks to the needy. Irfan tweeted, "Doing our bit for the society."

Whatever u guys can do please go ahead and help each other as far as sanitation is concerned. "But don't gather crowd! @iamyusufpathan #corona is a small start, hopefully, we will keep helping more. Everyone of us." PTI



## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12891

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



(set by Arden)

- M11 Add spirit to a pigment (7)
- 12 Russian's short gambit accepted – nothing much (7)
- 13 It's offensive to restrain the ju ju man (7)
- 14 Accompanying picture on the way back (11)
- 19 Well, agree Scot essentially was a painter (2,5)
- 21 Swimmer close to finish, miscalculating (7)
- 23 Spell able to make you fall (7)
- 25 Come back over and over I-beam (7)
- 26 A strange flower indeed (4,4)
- 27 Agents called Herb (5)
- 5 Give up fine state, briefly (6)
- 6 It's fashionable and loud, girl gains notoriety (6)
- 8 Amateurish move by the warrior (7)
- 9 Procedure to keep check, both sides are crazy (5)
- 13 Stand and watch with alertness (7,3)
- 15 It's believed they consume raw material (7)
- 16 Gets help, it's disputed (8)
- 17 Wood and sand, essentially they're different (5)
- 18 Man eater therefore will climb on board (6)
- 20 Spy exposed, go after those at the top (6)
- 22 Father among others gets food (6)
- 24 Ache for French bread (4)

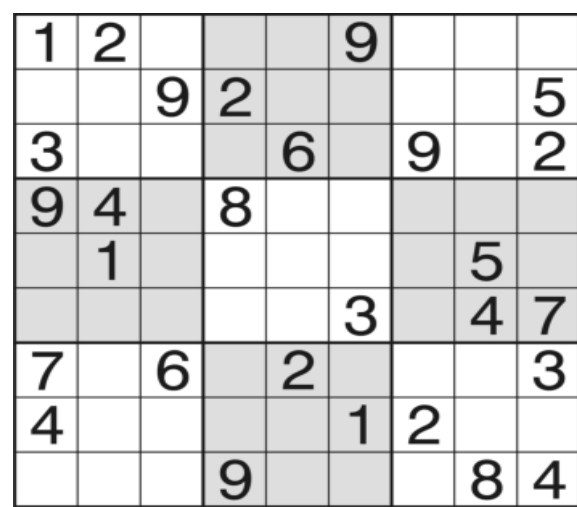
### ACROSS

- 6 In theory, it could be to avoid the sarcasm (5)
- 7 Mike's taken off the shoe, takes only a moment (8)
- 10 Payment overstated – the stock gains weight here (7)

### DOWN

- 1 Spooner's fish finger salad (8)
- 2 I said block the opening (6)
- 3 Maybe evident in low capital (10)
- 4 Tie not a Glaswegian (4)

## SUDOKU



### Solution to puzzle 12890

Z E R O T O L E R A N C E  
A L L B F S X R U  
C R E E L T W O T I M E R S  
C G I E T A O E  
I N A D V A N C E L A S E R  
D N I I R O I  
E N T R O P Y T N S U L I N  
N U S S E O C T A L O N T  
T R U S S E D A B A L O N T  
T P P E L L V R  
R U R A L L O S E L E A F  
O I E L R M R A  
N I G H T B I R D A S D I C  
E H G N E T I E  
A T L O G G E R H E A D S

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5 2 3 6 7 4 9 8 1  
7 4 9 8 5 1 2 6 3  
6 1 8 3 9 2 4 7 5  
4 3 7 9 8 6 1 5 2  
2 9 6 1 4 5 7 3 8  
1 8 5 7 2 3 6 9 4  
9 7 4 5 1 8 3 2 6  
3 5 1 2 6 9 8 4 7  
8 6 2 4 3 7 5 1 9

## FAITH

### Always valid

A person who offers advice must have three qualities. He must not help us with the expectation of something in return. That is why *avyaaja bandha* – a connection with us, which does not arise for any particular reason – is necessary. The person who advises must do so without discriminating. For example, he must give his valuable advice, whether the seeker of help is an enemy or a friend. This is the quality of *avishesha*. He must have yet another quality – *asesha*. If he sees any wrongdoing, he must not be indifferent to it, but must at once point out that it is wrong. He must not restrict himself to helping only those who are dear to him.

It is hard to define *dharma*. What is *dharma* in one *yuga* is *adharm* in another. What is *dharma* in one place may be *adharm* in another. But Vidura's *upadesa* to Dhritrashtra is valid at all times and in all geographies, said Kidambi Narayanan in a discourse. Vidura Niti is spread over eight chapters, with a total of 545 verses. Each chapter deals with a different subject and, by the end, we find that Vidura has covered the problems which we face in life, and has solutions for them too.

Vidura tells how to identify the educated and uneducated and describes the qualities of a good ruler. In the fourth chapter, he talks about the quality of tolerance. In the fifth chapter he talks about things we must do and what we must not do. Naturally, after having spoken so elaborately about dharmic ways of thinking and behaving, Vidura is anxious to know if Dhritrashtra has benefited. But all the advice has been wasted on Dhritrashtra, who says whatever is destined to happen will happen. Even after listening to Vidura, he is unwilling to treat the Pandavas in a dharmic manner.