

# Olympics in doubt even in 2021: Tokyo CEO

Don't know if it is going to be possible to get the virus under control by next July, says Muto

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TOKYO

As the coronavirus spreads in Japan, the chief executive of the Tokyo Games said on Friday he wouldn't be able to guarantee that the postponed Olympics will be staged next year – even with a 16-month delay.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe issued an emergency declaration this week to battle the virus, putting the country under restrictions after it couldn't avoid the spread.

"I don't think anyone would be able to say it is going to be possible to get it under control by next July or not," Tokyo organising committee CEO Toshiko Muto said, speaking through an interpreter at a news conference conducted remotely. "We certainly are not in a position to give you a clear answer."

The Olympics was postponed last month with a new opening set for July 23, 2021, followed by the Paralympics on Aug. 24.

"We have made the decision to postpone the games by one year," said Muto. "So this means that all we can do is work hard to prepare for the Games. We sincerely hope that come next year, mankind will manage to overcome the coronavirus crisis."

Muto was asked several times about the added costs of postponing, which has been estimated by Japanese media at between \$2 billion-\$6 billion. He said it was too soon to know the price tag and who would pay.

He also revealed that the Tokyo organisers had taken insurance policies. "Tokyo 2020 has taken out several insurance policies," said Muto. "But whether the postponement of the Games

qualifies as an event that is covered is not clear yet."

## The flame

He was also asked about the Olympic flame, which was taken off public display this week in Fukushima prefecture. Muto had an away-from-the-microphone talk with Tokyo spokesman Masa Takaya before talking about the flame.

"After the Olympic torch relay was cancelled, the Olympic flame was put under the management of Tokyo 2020," Muto said.

There are suggestions the International Olympic Committee is thinking of taking the flame on a world tour, hoping to use it as a symbol of the battle against the virus. However, any tour would be impossible until travel restrictions are lifted.

Taking the flame away from Japan could also upset the hosts.



**Around the world in solidarity:** The Olympic flame, which was taken off public display this week, could go on a world tour – as a symbol of the battle against the virus – if travel restrictions are lifted. **• AFP**

## BCCI clears contracted players' dues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The BCCI has cleared the quarterly dues of all its centrally-contracted cricketers and vowed not to let anyone suffer despite the uncertainty triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Major cricket boards like those of England and Australia have indicated that players will have to take pay cuts.

"When the lockdown was announced on March 24, the BCCI was ready for any eventuality. The Board clears quarterly instalments of central contract payments to its players," a BCCI official told PTI.

"Plus the match fees of all those who played for India and India-A during this period, all these dues were cleared at the end of

the financial year," he said.

The England and Australian players have admitted openly that they are bracing up for pay cuts.

The announcement of central contracts has been postponed in Australia, while England skipper Joe Root has applied for furlough along with his Yorkshire teammates. Under the furlough scheme, the British government pays 80 per cent of wages – up to £2,500 – per month.

A BCCI official said the Board's financial stability helps in testing times when some of the other boards are struggling to even pay their domestic players. "Neither our international nor our domestic cricketers will suffer," the official said.

## 'I want to play in next Candidates'

World No. 23 Vidit has been busy with online games

### CHESS

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Vidit Gujrathi may be pardoned if he thought he wouldn't be too busy after the coronavirus crisis forced him to cancel his flight tickets to Europe and the United States.

But, the strongest Indian chess player after Viswanathan Anand (World No. 15), Vidit (No. 23) has been playing one online event after the other from his home in Nashik.

### Fund-raiser

On Saturday, the 25-year-old will take on around 20 players from across the world, at the same time on chess.com, in a fund-raising programme for India's fight against the virus.

Anand, P. Harikrishna, B. Adhiban, Koneru Humpy and D. Harika will also be making their moves. The donations from the participants will go to the PM-CARES fund.

"I am really looking forward to the event and it is the first time I am giving a simultaneous exhibition online," Vidit told *The Hindu*. "I have been part of such events physically, though. Two years ago, I had played against 60 in Rajasthan, and won all the games."

His career in chess had begun in a simultaneous display by a Grandmaster. "I was seven when I played that



**The goal:** Vidit Gujrathi says he wants to break into the world's top 10. **• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

**I think I will be peaking as a player in two years when the Candidates is held**

event against Abhijit Kunte," he said. "I had drawn that game and Kunte went on to become my coach."

He said he was happy to be part of the chess.com event. "It is great that all the top six Indian players are joining for this noble cause," he said. "I am told the response from the chess fans has been excellent."

### Dual role

"I enjoyed it as well; I was giving commentary on my own live games," he said. "I was also part of the commentary team for the recent Candidates tournament in Russia."

On Saturday, Vidit will take on around 20 players simultaneously, on chess.com, in a fund-raising event for India's fight against the virus

V. Anand, P. Harikrishna, B. Adhiban, Koneru Humpy and D. Harika will also be making their moves

Vidit's aim is to be a participant in the next Candidates tournament. Given his consistency and age, he is probably India's best bet to qualify for the Candidates, the winner of which will earn the right to challenge the World champion.

"That is my aim now; I think I will be peaking as a player in two years when the Candidates is held," he said. "I also want to break into the world's top 10."

## Online blitz event raises nearly ₹2.40 lakh

'Let's Fight Corona Together' attracts 180 players, including 17 GMs

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

The online-friendly nature of chess played its part perfectly as Chessbase India organised a one-day event that helped raise ₹2,39,742 towards PM-CARES fund.

Titled, "Let's Fight Corona Together", this online blitz chess event attracted 180 players including 17 GMs, with India No. 2 Vidit Gujrathi being the top seed.

For the record, Kerala's rising star Nihal Sarin won the title, ahead of Aravindh Chithambaram and Vidit.

The trio tallied eight points each from nine rounds but Nihal was adjudged champion on superior tie-break score. There was no entry fee, but each participant was expected to donate a minimum of ₹100 and a maximum of whatever he/she was comfortable with.

Seasoned GMs Dibyendu Barua, K. Sasikiran and Neelotpal Das contributed ₹20,000 each.

Nihal, the eventual champion who was a last-minute entry, pitched in with ₹7,500. GMs Magesh Chandran, Arun Prasad, M.S. Thej Kumar, N. Srinath and Ankit Rajpara contributed ₹5,000 each.

GM R.R. Laxman not only chipped in with ₹4,500, but also encouraged many to play the event. GM Diptayan Ghosh donated ₹3,000.

Interestingly, Sasikiran, Arun and Thej were among those who contributed without playing the fund-raiser. Likewise, the trio of S. Vi-

jayalakshmi, Sriram Jha and S. Meenakshi donated ₹7,000.

**Unknown contributor** Shiv Shome, 13, chose to shell out ₹2,500 while an unknown contributor, who did not play, donated ₹10,000.

IM Sagar Shah and FIDE instructor Niklesh Jain are holding online classes since the beginning of the lockdown to raise funds.

Shah, also the co-founder and CEO of Chessbase India, said, "We have raised an additional ₹74,179 in the last 16 days through online classes. More importantly every day close to 500 people learn chess live."

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## Idea was to win back fans: Pat Cummins

Rejects Clarke's contentious IPL contracts claim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MELBOURNE

The Australian cricket team's low-key aggression against India during the 2018-19 Test series was more about winning back fans rather than protecting their IPL contracts, said pace spearhead Pat Cummins, rejecting former skipper Michael Clarke's contentious claims.

### Overall criticism

The India series was only the second Test series after the ball-tampering controversy that led to Steve Smith and

David Warner's suspensions and an overall criticism of their 'win at all cost' mentality.

"I think probably a bigger factor was six months before leading into that Indian series, the media and everyone commenting on the Aussie cricket team were pretty clear in their direction in the way they wanted the Aussies team to go.

"And that was playing a little bit less aggressively out on the field," Cummins, who was supposed to be IPL's highest paid overseas player

at ₹15.5 crore, told the BBC.

However, he didn't rule out that some players might have harboured thoughts about Clarke's assumption that they went soft on Indian skipper Virat Kohli in fear of losing out on IPL pay-checks.

"I'd say that would have been a bigger factor than trying to win or lose friends out on the cricket field. But you never know, that might have been a factor for some players."

Australia skipper Tim Paine had also rubbished Clarke's claims.



Virat Kohli and Tim Paine. **• FILE PHOTO**

## AIFF and FIFA to finalise new dates: Patel

### WOMEN'S U17 WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation is in discussion with world body FIFA to retain the original age criteria of the participating players and finalise new dates for the U-17 Women's World Cup, AIFF president Prafull Patel said on Friday.

Scheduled to be held in India in November, the event was postponed by FIFA last week. "I am happy to share that we are working with FIFA to choose a new and earliest possible timeline to host the U-17 Women's World Cup. The LOC [Local Organising Committee] and FIFA are working to finalise new dates keeping health and safety a priority," Patel tweeted.

"We are also in discussions with #FIFA to keep the age criteria of U-17 Women's World Cup the same, so that all the players who have been working very hard to prepare for the tournament, do not miss an opportunity to play due to the postponement," Patel added.

### IN BRIEF



### Tendulkar to help feed 5000 people

MUMBAI Sachin Tendulkar, who has already donated ₹50 lakh for the fight against the pandemic, has decided to feed 5000 people for a month. "Thankyou, @sachin\_rt for stepping in & helping Apnalaya help the ones suffering the most during this lockdown. He will be taking care of the ration of around 5000 people for a month. There are many more individuals who need your support, people! Donate below!," tweeted Apnalaya. Tendulkar replied, "My best wishes to @ApnalayaTweets to continue your work in the service of the distressed and needy. Keep up your good work." **• PTI**

### No match worth risking a life: FIFA boss Infantino

ZURICH FIFA president Gianni Infantino on Friday said "no match" is worth "risking a single human life" and that world football's governing body would be able to help financially national federations during the coronavirus pandemic. "Our first priority, our principle, the one we will use for our competitions and encourage everyone to follow is that health comes first," he said in a video message. "No match, no competition, no league is worth risking a single human life." **• AFP**

### Milan derby today

MILAN Italian giants AC Milan and Inter Milan are set to face off in a video game derby as the football-mad country remains in lockdown. AC Milan's Portuguese striker Rafael Leao will take on Inter's Sebastiano Esposito on Saturday at 6 p.m. IST on eFootball Pro Evolution Soccer. The Milan eDerby will be available live on Inter and AC Milan's official channels. "Being a derby there is always the desire to win. But the main objective is to be close to our fans in this complicated time," said Leao. **• AFP**

### Woods recovers from injury, but...

MIAMI Tiger Woods says he has recovered from a sore back that hindered his preparations for the now-postponed Masters but is missing the Augusta showdown. "I feel a little edgy. I want to get out there. I want to compete," Woods said. **• AFP**



### Wright appointed Derbyshire president

LONDON Former New Zealand captain John Wright has been appointed president of the Derbyshire Cricket Club. He replaces Harold Rhodes, who was president over the past year. Speaking about the appointment, chairman Ian Morgan, said: "John is one of the greatest batsmen to ever play for Derbyshire, scoring more than 14,000 runs for the club." **• IANS**



### Ex-Olympic champ to stage Ironman fundraiser

BERLIN Beijing Olympics triathlon champion Jan Frodeno has come up with an idea to raise money to fight COVID-19. Frodeno plans to livestream a complete 'Ironman challenge' from his home in Genova, Spain, from 11.30 a.m. IST on Saturday. The German will use a home pool for the 3.8km swim, an exercise bike for the 180km ride and run a full marathon on a treadmill. **• AFP**



### China SC rules in favour of Michael Jordan

BEIJING China's Supreme People's Court (SPC) has overturned earlier rulings by Beijing courts to favour U.S. basketball legend Michael Jordan's trademark appeal against a Chinese sportswear firm that allegedly infringed upon his naming rights. **• IANS**

## Lockdown more challenging than injury recovery: Tirkey

Former India hockey skipper says he misses playing golf

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

For the first time in his life, Dilip Tirkey could not go to church on Good Friday. He knows that will be the case even on Easter Sunday.

Confined to his home in Bhubaneswar during the lockdown, the former India hockey captain – and recently turned professional golfer – is missing golf and public life. But the ex-Member of Parliament understands his responsibility.

"As a player, captain, and political leader, I have performed my responsibilities. Now, I am performing my responsibilities as a citizen and obeying the government order to stay at home and contribute in the fight against coronavirus," Tirkey told *The Hindu* on Friday.

Tirkey is spending time doing exercises, watching news programmes, reading, and playing hockey and ludo with son Jayesh. He doesn't remember when he last stayed at home for such a long period. "Once, my ankle injury took a long time to heal. But when you are recovering from an injury, the



In competition mode! Tirkey playing ludo with wife Meera and son Jayesh. **• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

mindset is different. Now, it's more challenging."

Tirkey feels bad for the boys and girls who have been sent home from different hockey academies in his home district Sundargarh because of the lockdown.

### 'Tough for trainees'

"It's tough for these young players. Even though they are safe at home, they get a lot of facilities at a hostel. Their daily training schedule is stopped. Some of them belong to poor families and their parents are daily wage earners. It is the most difficult phase for those kids."

Tirkey, who has been named chairman of the newly formed Odisha Hockey Promotion Council (OHPC), hoped that the organisation will begin work for the overall development of the sport in the State once the lockdown ends.

Right now, Tirkey misses his new love: golf. He finds himself addicted to the sport, having teed off at the Golconda Masters (Hyderabad) and PGTI Players' Championship (Bengaluru) in February. "I am missing golf. It's early in my career, but I am enjoying it," he said.