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Tokyo Olympics 2020 Postponed

Why in News

The International Olympic Committee and the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee have decided to **postpone** the Tokyo 2020 Summer Games **to the summer 2021** due to the **coronavirus pandemic**.

- However, the Olympics Games **will keep the name Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020**.
- The decision came after some of the major sporting nations like **Australia and Canada** withdrew from the Tokyo Olympics 2020.
- The nations withdrew in the backdrop of **limited international travel, difficulty in training and exposed risk of contracting or spreading the disease**.

COVID-19

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has named the new coronavirus disease as **'COVID-19'**.
- The new name is taken from the words **"corona", "virus" and "disease", with 2019** representing the year when it emerged (the outbreak was reported to the WHO on 31st December, 2019).
- The word coronavirus refers to the **group of viruses it belongs to**, rather than the latest strain. The latest strain has been designated 'Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)' by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has also declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. According to the WHO, a pandemic is declared when a new disease for which people do not have immunity spreads around the world beyond expectations.

Key Points

- **Historic Postponement :**

- The organisers have postponed the event for the **first time in its 124-year modern history.**

The first modern Olympic Games were held in 1896 at Athens (Greece).

- It is also considered as the **first postponement** of an Olympics in **peacetime.**
- Earlier, the games were not held during World War II considering the turmoil across the world.
- In 1940, Japan was to be the first Asian country to host the Olympics.
 - But its military aggression in Asia forced the annulment of the Olympics scheduled in Japan.
 - The 1940 Olympics is known as the **“Missing Olympics”** after the Games were switched to Helsinki (Finland) before finally being scrapped because of World War II.

- **Economic Cost:**

- Tokyo was **spending \$12.6 billion** to host the Games and a postponement could **cost it \$6 billion** as the short-term period loss.
- It will also be a **bitter blow to sponsors and major broadcasters** who rely on this four-yearly event for critical advertising revenue.

Background

- **Origin:**

Olympic Games **originated in ancient Greece** and were an intrinsic part of a **religious festival.** They were held in honour of Zeus (the greek god of the sky) at Olympia in Greece.

- **Modern Olympics Games:**

- Olympic Games were **revived** in the late **19th century.**
- The first modern Olympic Games were held in 1896 at Athens (Greece).
- The **architect of the modern Olympics Games** was **Pierre, baron de Coubertin.**

- **International Olympic Committee (IOC):**

- It was created on **23 June 1894** and is the **supreme authority** of the Olympic Movement.
- It is a **not-for-profit independent** international organisation that is committed to building a better world through sport.
- It ensures the regular celebration of the Olympic Games, supports all affiliated member organisations and strongly encourages, by appropriate means, the promotion of the Olympic values.

- **Pattern of Olympics Games:**

- The Olympics have been held **every four years since 1948**.
- The honour of holding the Olympic Games is **entrusted to a city, not to a country**. The choice of the city lies solely with the IOC.

Thus, the application to hold the Games is made by the chief authority of the city, with the support of the national government.

Source:TH

Indigenously Developed Testing Kits for COVID-19

Why in News

Recently, the **test kits for COVID-19** developed by the Pune-based **MyLab Discovery Solutions and Germany's Altona Diagnostics** have been approved by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**.

- The two companies have also received **approval to mass manufacture the kits** after they received commercial **approval from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)**.
- Currently, the diagnostic kits to test people for COVID-19 are **imported from the USA**.

Key Points

- **Approval Conditions:**

- Earlier, the kits approved by the **United States Food and Drugs Administration** or certified by the **European Union** were allowed to offer commercial tests for detecting SARS CoV-2.
- However, ICMR stated that it is no longer a requirement and even those **approved by the National Institute of Virology (NIV) would be eligible for testing**.

- **Feature of the Developed Testing Kit:**

- **Quick Detection:** The developed kit **detects the infection within two and half hours** compared to over seven hours taken by current protocol.
- **Accuracy:** The **ability to detect the early stage of detection and highest accuracy** has been observed with the indigenously developed testing kit for COVID-19.
- **Affordable:** For the government labs, these testing kits would cost nearly **Rs 1,200 per test kit, which is about one-fourth of the current testing kit** used by India.

- **Indigenously Developed:**

- The indigenously developed testing kits for COVID-19 by MyLabs have been manufactured **as per World Health Organisation (WHO) /Centre for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines**.
- **MyLabs discovery Solutions is the first indigenous manufacturer** to be approved for deploying its **kits for COVID-19 testing**.
- The approval from National Institute of Virology (NIV) to MyLabs is expected to provide major support to the **'Make in India' programme** in the future.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research.
- It was founded in **1911** with the name of Indian Research Fund Association (IRFA) and **renamed as ICMR in 1949**.
- It is **funded** by the Government of India through the Department of Health Research, **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.

National Institute of Virology

- The National Institute of Virology is one of the major Institutes of the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**.
- It was established at **Pune, Maharashtra in 1952 as Virus Research Centre (VRC)** under the auspices of the **ICMR** and the **Rockefeller Foundation (RF), USA**.

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)

- The CDSCO is the Central Drug Authority for discharging functions assigned to the Central Government under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**.
- Major Functions:
 - **Regulatory control** over the import of drugs, approval of new drugs and clinical trials.
 - Approval of **certain licences** as Central Licence Approving Authority

Source:TH

MPLADS for Medical Facilities

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** has made amendments to the **Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)** guidelines.

Key Points

- The amendments allow **Members of Parliament** (MPs) to recommend funds for purchase of medical testing and screening equipment for government hospitals and setting up of other related facilities in their respective constituencies, to contain **COVID-19**.
- For the same, the government has permitted **one-time use of funds** from MPLADS. Expenditure under this **one-time dispensation** will be restricted to the **end of financial year 2020-21** and no expenditure, under any circumstances, shall be allowed to make/roll over into next financial year 2021-22.
- Apart from this, field work of large-scale sample surveys has been suspended by the **National Statistical Office** (NSO).

Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme

- It was announced in **December 1993** and initially came under the control of the **Ministry of Rural Development**. Later, in **October 1994**, it was **transferred** to the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.
- The **1st Guidelines** were issued in **February 1994**, covering the concept, implementation and monitoring of the Scheme.
- **Objective:**
 - To enable MPs to recommend works of developmental nature with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets based on the locally felt needs to be taken up in their Constituencies.
 - Lok Sabha Members can recommend works within their constituencies and elected Members of Rajya Sabha can recommend works within the State they are elected from.
 - Nominated Members of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.
 - To create durable assets of national priorities viz. drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation and roads, etc.
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme**. The **annual MPLADS fund** entitlement **per MP constituency is ₹5 crore**.
- The **recommendations of the works are made by the MPs** for the betterment of the community.

Source: IE

Burden on Companies Eased

Why in News

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has made a series of announcements to ease the burden of companies during the **COVID-19** outbreak.

Announcements

- Increase in the threshold for initiation of corporate insolvency from **Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1 crore**.
 - This would **prevent small businesses** from being **dragged into insolvency** (inability to pay debts when they are due).
 - This would also ease the compliance burden on companies during the coronavirus outbreak.
- A **suspension on mandatory filings** with the **Corporate Affairs Ministry's MCA-21 portal**, also additional fees for late filing has been removed.
- A **60 day relaxation** in the rule requiring that **board meetings** be held once every 120 days for the next two quarters.
- The companies would also be exempt from the requirement under the **Companies Act** that **at least one director** be in residency in the country for at least 182 days in the year.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016

- In India, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 is a step towards settling the legal position with respect to **financial failures and insolvency**.
- It provides easy exit with a painless mechanism in cases of insolvency of individuals as well as companies.

Applicability of the Code

- The provisions of the Code shall apply for **insolvency, liquidation, voluntary liquidation or bankruptcy of the following entities** :
 - Any company incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013 or under any previous law.
 - Any other company governed by any special act for the time being in force, except in so far as the said provision is inconsistent with the provisions of such Special Act.
 - Any Limited Liability Partnership under the LLP Act 2008.
 - Any other body being incorporated under any other law for the time being in force, as specified by the Central Government in this regard.

- Moreover, this code shall apply only if the **minimum amount of the default is Rs. 1 lakh.**
- However, by placing the notification in the Official Gazette, the Central Government may specify the minimum amount of default of higher value which **shall not be more than Rs. 1 crore.**
- **Exceptions:** There is an exception to the applicability of the Code that it shall not apply to corporate persons who are regulated financial service providers such as Banks, Financial Institutions and Insurance companies.

MCA21

- MCA21 is an e-Governance initiative of the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA),** Government of India.
- It enables an **easy and secure access of the MCA services** to the corporate entities, professionals and citizens of India.
- The application is designed to fully **automate all processes** related to the proactive enforcement and compliance of the legal requirements under **the Companies Act, 1956, New Companies Act, 2013 and Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008.**
- This will help the business community to **meet their statutory obligations.**

Source: IE

Cess Fund for Welfare of Construction Workers

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Labour & Employment has Issued an advisory to all States/UTs to use the Cess Fund for Welfare of Construction Workers.

Key Points

- The advisory comes under Section 60 of the **Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, 1996.**
 - The Act regulates the employment and conditions of service of building and other construction workers.
 - It provides for their safety, health and welfare measures and for other matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- All State Governments/UTs have been advised to transfer funds from the Cess Fund to the account of construction workers through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.**
- The amount to be granted to construction workers may be decided by the respective state governments and Union territories.

- The financial assistance at this point in time would help to mitigate the financial crisis of construction workers to some extent and boost their morale to deal with COVID-19.
- **About the Cess Fund**
 - The BOCW Cess Act, 1996, provides for the levy and collection of cess at 1-2 % of the cost of construction, as the Central government may notify.
 - The cess has been levied at the rate of 1% of the cost of construction, as notified by the Central government in its official gazette.
 - The cess is **collected by the State governments and UTs.**
 - It is utilised for the welfare of building and other construction workers by the respective State Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Boards.

Cess

- Cess is a **form of tax** levied over and above the base tax liability of a taxpayer.
- Cess is resorted to only when there is a need to meet the **particular expenditure for public welfare.**
- Cess is not a permanent source of revenue for the government, and it is **discontinued** when the purpose of levying it is fulfilled.
- It can be levied on **both indirect and direct taxes.**
- **Examples :**
 - **Swachh Bharat Cess:** Introduced in 2015, a 0.5% Swachh Bharat cess was imposed to fund a national campaign for clearing the roads, streets and the infrastructure of India.
 - **Infrastructure Cess:** Announced in Union Budget 2016, this cess was charged on the production of vehicles.

Source: PIB

Traditional New Year Festivals

Why in News

The President of India has greeted the people on the eve of Chaitra Shukla Pratipada, Ugadi, Gudi Padava, Cheti Chand, Navreh and Sajibu Cheiraoba.

These festivals of the **spring season** mark the beginning of the **traditional new year** in India.

Chaitra Shukla Pratipada

- It marks the beginning of the **new year of the Vikram Samvat** also known as the **Vedic [Hindu] calendar.**

- Vikram Samvat is based on the day when the emperor Vikramaditya defeated Sakas, invaded Ujjain and called for a new era.
- Under his supervision, astronomers formed a new calendar based on the **luni-solar system** that is still followed in the northern regions of India.
- It is the first day during the waxing phase (in which the visible side of moon is getting bigger every night) of the moon in the **Chaitra (first month)** of Hindu calendar).

Gudi Padwa and Ugadi

- These festivals are celebrated by the people in the **Deccan region** including **Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.**
- The common practice in the celebrations of both the festivals is the **festive food** that is prepared with a **mix of sweet and bitter.**
- A famous concoction served is jaggery (sweet) and neem (bitter), called **bevu-bella** in the South, signifying that life brings both happiness and sorrows.
- **Gudi** is a doll prepared in **Maharashtrian** homes.
A bamboo stick is adorned with green or red brocade to make the gudi. This gudi is placed prominently in the house or outside a window/ door for all to see.
- For **Ugadi**, doors in homes are adorned with **mango leaf decorations** called **toranalu or Torana in Kannada.**

Cheti Chand

- **Sindhis** celebrate the new year as Cheti Chand. **Chaitra** month is called '**Chet**' in Sindhi.
- The day commemorates the birth anniversary of **Uderolal/Jhulelal**, the **patron saint of Sindhis.**

Navreh

- It is the **lunar new year** that is celebrated in **Kashmir.**
It is the **Sanskrit** word '*Nav-Varsha*' from where the word 'Navreh' has been derived.
- It falls on the first day of the Chaitra Navratri.
- On this day, Kashmiri pandits look at a bowl of rice which is considered as a symbol of riches and fertility.

Sajibu Cheiraoba

- It is a **ritual festival of Meiteis** which is observed on the first day of **Manipur lunar month Shajibu**, which falls in March/April every year.

- On the day of the festival, people arrange a **joint family feast** in which traditional cuisines are offered to local deities at the entrance gates of the houses.

Meities

- The Meiteis are **one of the most eminent ethnic groups of Manipur**, hailing from the Manipur Valley.
- They speak **Tibeto-Burman language** and most of the people belonging to the group, **follow Hindu customs**.

Source: PIB

Invest India Business Immunity Platform

Why in News

Recently, **Invest India**, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has launched the **'Invest India Business Immunity Platform'**.

Key Points

- The Business Immunity Platform (BIP) is designed as a comprehensive resource **to help businesses and investors** get real-time updates on India's active response to **COVID-19** (Coronavirus).
- BIP is an active platform for business **issue redressal, operating 24/7**, with a team of dedicated sector experts and responding to queries at the earliest.
- Important features of BIP are:
 - It keeps a regular track on developments with respect to the coronavirus.
 - Provides latest information on various central and state government initiatives, and answers and resolves queries through emails and on WhatsApp.
 - Includes frequently asked questions on important aspects like locations of COVID-19 testing and other location-specific information.
 - Maps and highlights the response mechanism put in place by leading Indian companies such as sanitation of staff vehicles, disabling biometric attendance systems, usage of video-conferencing and tele-conferencing, developing online solutions and other unique initiatives.
- This platform also provides the ability to join the dots to find matching suppliers with required supplies and for innovators, startups and MSMEs to showcase their solutions

Invest India

- Invest India is **India's national Investment Promotion & Facilitation Agency**.

- It was set up in 2009 as a **non-profit venture** under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- It focuses on **sector-specific investor targeting and development** of new partnerships to enable sustainable investments in India.
- It partners with substantial investment promotion agencies and multilateral organizations and also actively works with several Indian states to build capacity as well as bring in global best practices in investment targeting, promotion and facilitation areas.

Source:PIB

Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme

Why in News

Recently, the **Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS)** has allowed Defence veterans with lifestyle diseases on long treatment to purchase the required medicines for the month of April at once to contain the spread of **COVID-19**.

Key Points

- ECHS is a flagship Scheme of the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare, **Ministry of Defence**. It was launched with effect from April 2003.
- **Aim:** To provide quality **healthcare for Ex-servicemen (Army, Navy and Air Force) pensioners and their dependents**.
Under the scheme **allopathic and AYUSH** **medicare** is provided through a network of ECHS Polyclinics, AYUSH hospitals spread across the country.
- **Services Provided:** ECHS Polyclinics are designed to provide '**OutPatient Care**' which includes consultation, essential investigation and provision of medicines.
Specialized consultations, investigations and 'In Patient Care' (Hospitalization) is provided through spare capacity available in Service hospitals/Government Hospitals/civil hospitals empanelled with ECHS.
- **Funding:** The Scheme is financed by the Government of India.
- **Headquarter:** The **Central Organisation ECHS** is located at **Delhi** in the Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Army).

Source: TH

National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)

Why in News

Recently, the Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare visited the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Control Room to review the current status of **COVID-19**.

Key Points

- The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), formerly National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD), had its origin as the Central Malaria Bureau, established at Kasauli (Himachal Pradesh) in 1909.
- NICD was transformed into the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) with a larger mandate of **controlling emerging and re-emerging diseases in 2009**.
- It functions as the **nodal agency** in the country for disease surveillance facilitating prevention and control of communicable diseases.
- It is also a **national level institute for training specialized manpower** for public health, laboratory sciences and entomological services and is involved in various applied research activities.
- **Major Functions**
 - Undertakes investigations of disease outbreaks all over the country.
 - Provides referral diagnostic services to individuals, community, medical colleges, research institutions and state health directorates.
 - Engaged in **generation and dissemination of knowledge** in various areas like Epidemiology, Surveillance, and Laboratories etc.
 - **Applied integrated research** in various aspects of communicable as well as some aspects of non-communicable diseases has been one of the prime functions of the Institute.
- The Institute is under **administrative control of the Director General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- The Institute has its **headquarters in Delhi**.

Source: PIB

Anosmia and Ageusia: Possible Signs of COVID-19

Why in News

Recently, Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialists have noted a growing number of patients with **anosmia (the abrupt loss of smell)** and **ageusia (loss of sense of taste)**. Both anosmia and ageusia could be signs of **COVID-19** in people who otherwise appear well.

The World Health Organisation lists the most common signs of COVID-19 as **fever, tiredness and dry cough.**

Anosmia

- Anosmia is the **partial or complete loss of the sense of smell.** This loss may be temporary or permanent.
- It is **caused by a swelling or blockage in the nose that prevents odors from getting to the top of the nose.**
- **Respiratory viral infection is a common cause** of loss of smell. The sense of smell usually returns when the infection is over.
- Other **main causes** of anosmia:
 - Irritation to the mucous membranes lining the nose.
 - Blockage of the nasal passages.
 - Brain or nerve damage.
- **Complications:** People with anosmia **may not be able to fully taste foods** and may lose interest in eating.
This can lead to **weight loss or malnutrition.**

Ageusia

- Ageusia is a condition that is characterized by a **complete loss of taste function of the tongue.**
People who have a reduced ability to taste are said to have **hypogeusia.**
- **Common Causes:**
 - Aging
 - Nasal airway problems.
 - Upper airway infection, such as sinus infection, tonsillitis, or sore throat.

Source: TH
