

1. IOC Approves Five New Sports for LA 2028 Olympics

New Sports Approved

Cricket and four other sports namely Flag football, lacrosse, squash, and baseball-softball have been approved for the 2028 Los Angeles Games by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).



IOC's Inclusion Rules

IOC rules allow each host city to request the inclusion of several sports for their edition of the games. On the basis of request, the IOC Executive committee takes decision on the basis of voting.

These five sports had received unanimous approval from the IOC Executive Board, with only two "no" votes out of about 90 IOC members.

Cricket's Return

Cricket, a sport with a massive following in India and a growing global audience, returns to the Olympics after more than a century, having appeared once at the 1900 Olympics.

Cricket Format for LA 2028

The LA Games will feature a six-team Twenty20 cricket tournament for both men and women.

Objective for Cricket's Inclusion

The IOC aims to engage a new, larger Olympic audience, especially among Asian cricket fans.

Cricket's Popularity

The annual Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament, valued at \$8.4 billion, is one of the world's richest sports leagues, attracting top players and coaches. It features the same T20 format as the LA 2028 Olympic cricket.

India's Olympic Aspirations

India, currently hosting the 50-over Cricket World Cup, plans to bid for the 2036 Olympics.

Positive Reactions to Cricket's Inclusion

International Cricket Council Chairman Greg Barclay and former India women's cricket captain Mithali Raj express excitement for cricket's inclusion, offering players the chance to compete for an Olympic gold medal and share the sport with fans worldwide.

Exclusion of Breakdance

Breakdance, which will debut in the Paris 2024 Olympics, will not return for LA 2028.

Uncertainty in Boxing

The status of boxing at the 2028 Games remains uncertain due to disputes within the International Boxing Association (IBA). The IOC stripped the IBA of recognition due to governance and credibility concerns. Boxing has been part of every Olympics since 1920 and will feature in the upcoming Paris Games.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: PIB and The Hindu

2. Need for Palliative care in India

Healthcare Costs and Poverty

Many Indians face financial distress due to healthcare costs, with an estimated 5.5 crore people falling below the poverty line annually because of out-of-pocket healthcare expenses.

Rising Non-Communicable Diseases

Non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, cardiac disease, renal failure, and stroke, are becoming prevalent in India, pushing more people into poverty as they require long-term treatment and check-ups.

The financial burden of continuous treatment for these diseases often goes unnoticed, leading to "financial toxicity" with risks of bankruptcy, treatment delays, and poor quality of life.

Limited Government Healthcare Spending

Only 1.35% of India's GDP is spent on government health services, leaving patients to cover most expenses, even in government hospitals where additional costs like travel and medicines are incurred.

Importance of Palliative Care

Palliative care is a branch of medicine that looks at improving the quality of life of those having life-limiting illnesses like cancers, end-stage kidney disease, debilitating brain disorders, complications of diabetes, and heart disease among others. It is different from other medical specialities as it focuses on alleviating uncontrolled symptoms of the incurable illnesses mentioned above, and preventing non-beneficial investigations, and treatments.

Comprehensive approach

Early initiation of palliative care in patients with advanced disease has shown to reduce health expenditure by up to 25%. Palliative care is provided through outpatient visits, inpatient visits, and home-based care. Home-based care further reduces the cost of seeking care as home-bound patients no longer have to travel to seek healthcare.

Palliative care takes into consideration not just the physical dimension of health but also actively looks at the social and economic realities of the patient and the family. Vocational rehabilitation and social reintegration are crucial elements of palliative care which further help the affected family and the patient by providing them with the opportunities to earn a living and live independently with dignity.

Challenges and the Need for Investment

1. **Low Awareness:** Despite existing for four decades, awareness of palliative care in India is low among healthcare workers and the general public.
2. **Lack of Insurance Coverage:** Palliative care is not covered by most insurance schemes, resulting in poor demand and access.
3. **Inadequate Funding:** The public health system lacks sufficient funding for palliative care, causing reliance on private non-profit organizations.

Incorporating Palliative Care into Healthcare

1. Reorganizing Funding: Reorganizing the funding mechanism for the National Program for Palliative Care is essential to ensure consistent support.

2. Savings and Benefits: Investing in palliative care not only saves money for patients but also generates goodwill for corporate hospitals and improves bed utilization.

Moral Obligation

3. Prioritizing Palliative Care: Public and private healthcare providers should recognize the benefits of investing in palliative care for better quality of life, reduced financial burdens, and improved healthcare system utilization.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

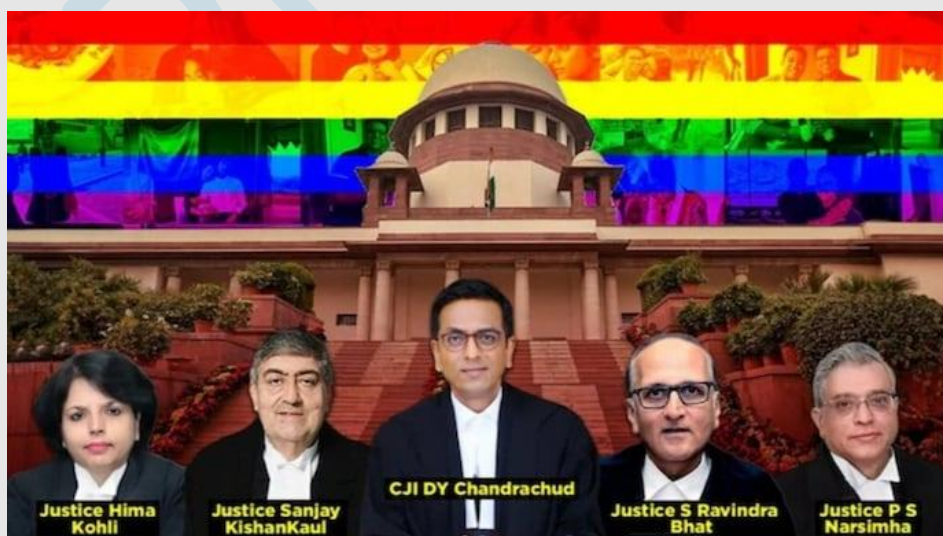
Source: The Hindu

3. Supreme Court verdict on same-sex marriage

Why in news?

In November 2022, two same-sex couples moved the Supreme Court, arguing that their inability to marry under Indian family law amounted to a violation of their fundamental rights to equality, life and liberty, dignity, free speech and expression, etc. After a hearing that lasted 10 days, the court reserved its judgment in May 2023 — and delivered its final verdict on October 17.

This is what the five-judge Bench — with Justices S Ravindra Bhat, Hima Kohli, and P S Narasimha in the majority and Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul in the minority — said on some key questions in their four separate opinions.



Is the right to marry a fundamental right?

The key issue before the court was simple: is there a right to marry under the Indian Constitution, and if there is, is the prevention of same-sex/ queer couples from being able to enjoy this right discriminatory?

Both questions were answered firmly and unanimously in the negative.

Marriage, according to the court, is an institution set up under law — and same-sex couples do not have a right to participate in it unless the law permits them to do so. The Special Marriage Act, 1954 — a legislation that was enacted to enable inter-faith marriages, and the challenge against which formed the foundation of the hearings — was upheld in its current form, i.e., permitting marriages only between a 'man' and a 'woman'. Ultimately, the court held that there is no fundamental right to marry.

If not marriage, do queer couples have the right to enter into a 'civil union'?

Civil Union is a marriage-like setup where the couple enjoys a catena of legal rights and protections. Again, the majority answered in the negative. The court held that only an elected legislature is competent to provide such rights and protections. This is because granting same-sex couples the right to marry or enter into a union will involve changes to a vast range of "legislative architectures" and policies.

When two persons enter into a marriage or a civil union, a host of tangible and intangible benefits are made available to them in areas such as insurance, banking, adoption, succession, pension, healthcare, etc. Given the complexity involved in aligning these frameworks (which are wholly based on heterosexual unions) with the right of queer persons to marry, the court found that only an elected legislature with the ability to consult a wide range of stakeholders is competent to intervene.

Can queer couples adopt children?

One of the benefits that flows from marriage — the ability to adopt children — was specifically at issue before the court.

Since a same-sex couple cannot marry under Indian law, it follows that they cannot also adopt children as a couple. However, since the Juvenile Justice Act 2015 permits a single person to adopt a child, same-sex couples were able to adopt children by designating one of the partners as the legal parent.

In 2022, however, the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) sidelined this arrangement by issuing the Adoption Regulations, which require a couple to be in a two-year stable marital relationship to be eligible for adoption. Over and above this, a circular was also issued prohibiting a person from adopting a child if that person was in a live-in relationship. Consequently, queer couples became ineligible to adopt.

The Supreme Court held that the judiciary was ill-equipped to consider the potential impact of extending the right to jointly adopt children to queer couples.

The court shifted the burden to the executive — and encouraged it to reconsider the laws on adoption in line with the best interests and welfare of children.

Ultimately then, what has changed for queer couples?

The judgment has refused to recognise queer marriages or civil unions. However, the court stated that a queer person has the right to choose an emotional, intimate and/or live-in partner, even if such a relationship does not amount to a marriage or civil union. This is largely a restatement of the law laid down in 'Navtej Singh Johar', where the court had decriminalised homosexuality by striking down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, as well as 'Puttaswamy', where it had recognised a queer person's sexual autonomy as a facet of their fundamental right to privacy.

What lies ahead?

The judgment represents a clear setback for the queer community — one that was largely unanticipated, given the Supreme Court's recent progressive jurisprudence on queer rights as well as its general openness to take on the role of the legislature in order to develop, guarantee, and enforce fundamental rights. The legislature, the wing of government tasked with translating the will of the people into law, must now take the lead in re-evaluating and improving Indian family law to make it more inclusive, gender-just, and non-discriminatory.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Social Issues

Source: The Indian Express