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**1. India's underwhelming Olympic opening ceremony outfit: How was the outfit chosen?****Why in News?**

The social media blitz over the uniform of the Indian contingent at the Olympics — with reactions ranging from its "tacky" and underwhelming look, to an "injustice" to Indian weaving traditions and motifs — focusses on the need for putting more thought and time into making sporting attire an extension of brand India. So how is the uniform for an Olympic contingent decided?

**Who decides on the design for a uniform?**

This works as a partnership between the Indian Olympic Committee (IOC) and the designer/design house, who is contracted after a fair bid. The selection process factors in both the financial and creative aspects of the agency.

The aspirant agency should be qualified enough to create a visual motif that can strengthen brand India and at the same time have enough money and resources to execute it. That's why every design house and sportswear brand vies for this contract with their respective country Olympic committees around the world. This is the first time that the uniform for Team India was entrusted to a designer — Tarun Tahiliani via Tasva, the premium affordable menswear label launched by him and Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Limited.

Many couture brands feature in the Paris Olympic 2024 list of uniform-makers, including Ralph Lauren for the United States, Berluti for France and Emporio Armani for Italy.

**Has a designer been given the contract for the Olympic team uniform before?**

So far, the dress code has just been sari, salwar suits, suits, bandhgalas, turbans and blazers for athletes. The Government has so far used designers for uniforms of the national carrier, Air India, and khadi promotion.

**What are considerations for clearing a design?**

According to Tahiliani, "A designer has to follow a set of guidelines put out by the Indian Olympic Committee (IOC). The team has to factor in the colours of the tricolour as most

countries follow their flag because that's all that is visible from afar. The current design was chosen by a vetting committee from multiple sketches and multiple options."

### **Why has Tahiliani come under criticism**

That's because smaller nations like Mongolia and Sri Lanka have created more thoughtful and representative designs that many feel reflect their handcrafted traditions and culture better. Mongolia featured embroideries with birds for freedom, mountains as a nod to the nation's landscapes and hard work, gold and silver accents for a touch of elegance and the Mongolian national colours of blue, red and white. Sri Lanka's white garments use silk, handmade embroidery, and beadwork to represent the looks of the royal courts of the 19th century.

The criticism around Tahiliani was that he used cotton instead of silk, did not use weaves or embroideries and chose digital ikat prints instead, which some interpreted as an insult to our handloom and handcrafting traditions.

Of course, even designers like Ralph Lauren and Armani have been criticised for making bland designs compared to smaller nations who seem to have taken their jobs seriously.

### **What's Tahiliani's defence?**

Responding to criticism why he didn't use cotton, Tahiliani said, "Paris can be boiling hot in July. That's why the athletes were in cotton and viscose crepe so that they could breathe easily. As for criticism that he could have used ikat weaves instead of digital prints, he said, "Yes, we used prints because we couldn't weave in three weeks, the timeline given to us. It's so ridiculous to expect that. Only the shoes were brocade from Banaras." Mongolian designers, in comparison, had three months to design for just 32 athletes.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: Indian Express

## **2. Behind Leh flight cancellations: high temperatures, low air**

### **Overview**

Sizzling day-time temperatures in Leh, Ladakh, led to many flight cancellations recently. The mercury peaked at 33.5 degree Celsius in the day. "High ground temperatures and runway restrictions in #Leh have necessitated the cancellation of all flights for today," Indigo, posted on X. Why did Leh's high temperatures lead to flight cancellations?

### **First, how do aircraft fly?**

Aircraft wings are shaped such that their top is slightly more curved than the bottom. So when an aircraft begins to move, the air over the top of the wings moves faster than that under the bottom.

This faster-moving air then creates a lower pressure above the wing (as per Bernoulli's principle), when compared to the pressure under it. This difference in the pressure generates a force (called lift) underneath the wings that helps the aircraft take off.

### **How do higher temperatures affect an aircraft's flight?**

1. **Less lift to push plane up:** Higher temperatures expand the air, making it less dense or thinner. In other words, they create more space between the air molecules which means that fewer molecules are available underneath the aircraft's wings to create enough lift to push the plane into the sky.

Aircraft usually get 1% less lift with every 3 degree Celsius of temperature rise.

2. **Reduces Engine Performance:** Thin air also affects the performance of an aircraft's engine. For instance, the combustion that creates an engine's power is severely impacted as there are fewer molecules of oxygen to mix with the fuel. The thrust — the force which moves an aircraft through the air — produced by the engines is also reduced due to thin air.

3. **Need for Longer Runways:** Higher temperatures mean that planes require longer runways and more powerful engines to take off. If an aircraft requires 6,500 feet of runway at 20 degree Celsius, it is going to require 8,200 feet at 40 degree Celsius.

4. **Difficult Landing:** Thinner air also makes landings more challenging. In addition to the brakes on the wheels, pilots use reverse thrust (literally, thrust in the opposite direction to the movement of the aircraft) to slow down the aircraft while landing. In case of thin air, the reverse thrust generated might not be enough to perform the task.

These aforementioned issues are particularly felt in airports located in higher altitudes (like the one in Leh), where the air is anyway thin and runways are often shorter.

### **What is in the future?**

The extreme heat which is affecting take-offs and landing of aircraft is a consequence of global warming. The global average temperature has increased by at least 1.1 degree Celsius since 1880. In India, annual mean temperatures have risen by about 0.7 degree Celsius compared to 1900 levels.

Aircraft manufacturers are always working towards making their planes lighter and more efficient. But much of that progress has likely been already made.

As a result, in the short term, airports will need to schedule flights in cooler times, increase the runway lengths, and decrease the take-off weight to deal with climate change-induced disruptions.

However, in the long run, the best bet would be to radically curb the burning of fossil fuels that contribute to global warming.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

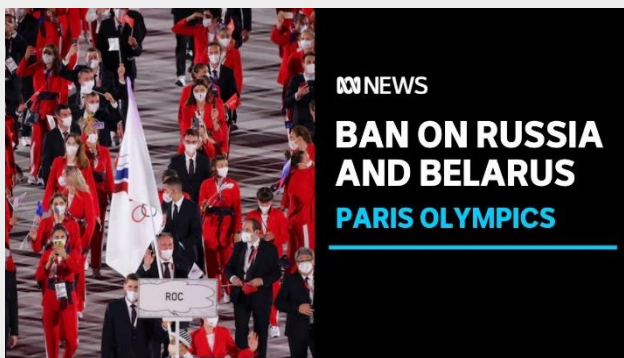
Source: The Hindu

### **3. Why are Russian athletes 'banned' from the 2024 Paris Olympics?**

#### **Why in News?**

Athletes from Russia and Belarus have been banned from participating in the ongoing Paris Olympics under their nations' official flags. Many of them are instead competing under a separate category called *Athlètes Individuels Neutres* or AIN in French, meaning Individual Neutral Athletes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier said, "Thanks to some of the leaders of the modern International Olympic Committee, we learned that an invitation to the Games is not an unconditional right of the best athletes, but a kind of privilege." He said it showed the Games can be used for "political pressure against people who have nothing to do with politics. And as gross, and in fact racist, ethnic discrimination."



### **Why are Russia and Belarus banned from participation?**

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) initially sanctioned the two nations soon after the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in 2022, just days after the Winter Olympics ended in Beijing on February 20, 2022. It said the invasion had violated the Games' Olympic Truce, which says nations are not to attack one another from one

week before the Olympic Games to one week after the Paralympic Games. The Paralympics are held shortly after the Olympics.

Belarus was also implicated for allegedly allowing Russia to use its territory for military purposes. Its western border is with Russia, while Ukraine borders it on the south.

In October 2023, the Russian Olympic Committee was officially suspended after it declared its authority over Ukrainian sports organisations in Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia — regions the IOC recognised as part of the Ukrainian Olympic Committee.

The IOC also cited Russia's International Friendship Association (IFA), formed to conduct the Summer and Winter Friendship Games, as a political body and a blatant violation of the IOC charter. The charter says, "Recognising that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organisations within the Olympic Movement shall apply political neutrality".

After Russia announced its Friendship Games for September 2024, the IOC said the Russian government "launched a very intensive diplomatic offensive" by having its delegations, ambassadors, and other governmental authorities approach governments globally, describing it as "a cynical attempt by the Russian Federation to politicise sport."

However, the concept of "political neutrality" is not based on any objective criteria and it can be difficult to arrive at a consensus on its interpretation, especially in large-scale global competitions. Critics also note that athletes from Israel, whose military invaded the Gaza Strip despite international condemnation last year, continue to be official participants.

### **So who can participate from Russia and Belarus?**

The IOC announced in 2023 that Russian and Belarusian athletes can participate in the Olympics, provided they don't represent their country or any associated organisation. Any athlete actively supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine cannot compete.

According to the IOC, "AINs are athletes with a Russian or Belarusian passport who have qualified through the existing qualification systems of the International Federations (IFs) on the field of play."

The move aims to allow athletes to compete and improve their stature as athletes. While 32 athletes accepted the invite, another 28 who qualified declined the offer. The athletes will compete under a neutral flag and wear a neutral uniform. If they win medals, a neutral song will be played in place of their country's national anthem. The audience also cannot wave their flags.

### **Has Russia been banned from the Olympics before?**

Yes. In 2017, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) reported a major scandal where over 1,000 individuals had benefited from a state-sponsored doping scheme between 2011 and 2014. This included athletes who won medals at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. The IOC then issued a ban, but individual athletes were allowed to apply as "Olympic athletes from Russia". In the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, 168 Russians cleared the vetting process, while 45 others did not.

In 2019, the WADA also voted to ban Russia from the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Russia lost the right to bid for or compete in tournaments and government officials were banned from attending major Olympic events. At the Tokyo Olympics, Russian athletes competed under the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) banner.

### **Are independent athletes competing in the Olympics for the first time?**

No. The Olympics has had a history of allowing athletes to participate as independent or neutral athletes.

Following the dissolution of the USSR, some athletes from the region competed in the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Spain, as independent participants under the Olympic flag. This was allowed as the former Soviet states did not have Olympic committees.

The Indian Olympic Association was suspended from the IOC in 2014, due to its failure to comply with the Olympic Charter and its statutes relating specifically to "good governance". Three athletes who qualified for the Winter Olympics could compete under the Olympic flag. With the reinstatement of the Indian association on February 11, days after the games commenced, two of the three athletes could compete under the Indian flag with their events to be held in the remaining days.

In the 2016 Olympics at Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, the IOC allowed the formation of the Refugee Olympic Team so that athletes from displaced regions could compete.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: Indian Express