Russia’s Ban from Sports

Why in news?

Recently World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) decided to ban Russia from global sporting competitions for a period of four years.

What is role of WADA in sports?

- The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is a foundation initiated by the International Olympic Committee based in Canada.
- It aims to promote, coordinate and monitor the fight against drugs in sports.
- The agency's key activities include scientific research, education, development of anti-doping capacities, and monitoring of the World Anti-Doping Code, whose provisions are enforced by the UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport.
- The aims of the Council of Europe Anti-Doping Convention and the United States Anti-Doping Agency are also closely aligned with those of WADA.

What are the reasons behind Russia’s ban from sports?

- Recently 12-member WADA executive committee voted unanimously to declare the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) “non-compliant” with global anti-doping rules.
- The reason behind the ban dates back to the lead up to the 2016 Rio Olympic Games when an independent commission set up by WADA found a “deeply rooted culture of cheating” in Russian athletics.
- Barely weeks before the Games, had whistle-blower reports alleged that Russia ran one of the most sophisticated doping programmes in the world in which the Russian sports ministry, the intelligence service and the country’s anti-doping experts colluded to hide large-scale violations.
- The whistle-blower, Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of the Moscow lab who is now under the protection of the US Federal Witness Protection Program.
- The 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi in which Russia topped the medals tally was under the scanner, where it was alleged that dope-tainted urine

samples were replaced with clean ones.

What will be the effects of the decision on Russia?

- The anti-doping watchdog's decision is expected to affect Russia the most at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics where the nation's flag, name and anthem will not be allowed.
- Apart from the Olympics, the ban can extend to the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, provided Russia qualifies.
- Sports and government officials from Russia will not be able to attend competitions, and Russia cannot host international events during the four-year period.
- It does not however apply to Euro 2020 which is considered a continental (and not global) football competition and Russia will remain a co-host.
- Russia has three weeks (from the date of the order) to appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and the signs are that it will.
- A line of defence already advanced by Russia is to discredit generally, an arbitration is expected to take six to 12 months.
- This means that regardless of whether an appeal is filed, Russia will not be present at the Winter Youth Olympic Games that starts in Lausanne, Switzerland from January 9, 2020.

Will the ban actually works on Russia?

- International Olympics Committee (IOC) said that it will support "the toughest sanctions against all those responsible" and urged WADA "to take further action given the seriousness of the manipulation". Post ratification, the stance has remained unchanged.
- Seen along with WADA's standard code on compliance, the governing bodies of different sports are likely to enforce the strictures in a similar manner.
- Meanwhile WADA's very own Athlete Committee, though, is dissatisfied and has termed the sanctions piecemeal.
- Even as Russia, the nation, stands barred, individual Russian athletes deemed untainted can still participate as neutrals, like they had at Rio and the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Games (South Korea).
- In the latter, Russia's men's hockey team played as the "Olympic Athletes from Russia" and even won the gold medal.
- The only meaningful action, according to the Athlete Committee, is a complete ban on Russian participation.

Source: The Hindu

