

Japan insists Olympics will go ahead after cancellation report

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Tokyo, January 22 (RHC)-- Japan has denied a report that there is an agreement among officials that the Tokyo Olympics, which have already been delayed for a year, are "doomed" because of the still-raging

coronavirus pandemic and that the event will have to be cancelled.

The report in The Times, a British newspaper, said officials were scrambling to find face-saving way to announce their decision. “No one wants to be the first to say so but the consensus is that it’s too difficult,” The Times quoted an unnamed senior official as saying. “Personally, I don’t think it’s going to happen.”

In response, Japan’s Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Manabu Sakai said there was no truth to the report and Games organisers said all event partners, including the Japanese government and the International Olympic Committee, were “fully focused” on hosting the Games this summer.

With just over six months to go until the already postponed Olympics are due to start, doubts have grown about whether the mammoth international event will be viable with the pandemic still increasing worldwide and with vaccinations still lagging behind.

Japan has been hit less severely by COVID-19 than many other advanced economies, but a recent surge in cases has prompted the country to close its borders to non-resident foreigners and declare a state of emergency in Tokyo and chief cities. Health officials reported 5,652 new cases and at least 94 deaths on Thursday.

The pandemic has already dampened public support of the Games, which was originally scheduled last year. Polls show that as many as 80 percent of people do not want the event to proceed.

Doubts have also been raised internationally. Former London 2012 deputy chairman Keith Mills this week said he thought the Games looked “unlikely” to happen, while British Olympian Matthew Pinsent said it was “ludicrous” for the event to go ahead.

But Olympic officials and the Japanese organizers continue to press ahead with preparations for the Games, scheduled to open on July 23rd.

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