



Japan PM assures to move on with plans of Olympics amidst COVID-19 second wave

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NIGERIA: JAPAN -

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has vowed to push on with preparations to hold the Tokyo Olympics this summer, amidst the growing spread of COVID-19 new variant.

Despite oppositions and contrary views made by Taro Kono, his administrative and reform minister, that the Games may not go ahead as planned, becoming the first cabinet member to voice doubt over their staging, the Prime Minister's position was made known in a policy speech at the start of a regular parliament session.

Suga said "We will press ahead with preparations, with determination of building watertight anti-infection measures and holding an event that can bring hope and courage to the world."

It was disclosed that Japan has been less severely hit by the pandemic than many other advanced economies, but the recent surge in cases spurred it to close its borders to non-resident foreigners and declare a state of emergency in Tokyo and major cities.

Mr Suga's support ratings have, however, dropped as critics have described the government's handling of COVID-19 as too 'slow and inconsistent'.

President of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, has also pledged that the Tokyo Olympics will be a 'light at the end of the tunnel' in the global pandemic fight.

"We believe it is necessary to reconsider the number of participants at the Opening and Closing Ceremonies and how they will enter the stadium,

"This step would ensure the safety and security of the athletes and simplify operations," the Tokyo 2020 organising committee said, adding that a specific approach had not yet been decided in its talks with the IOC and other groups.