

Tepe Sigeman Chess Tournament

Malmö
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Remarks

Ambassador Tanmaya Lal

Hon. President of City Council Ms. Carina Nilsson

Mr. Håkan Jalling, President of Sveriges Schackförbund

Mr. Johan Sigeman

Mr. Joel Eklund

Hon. Member of Riksdag Ms. Eklund

All the chess players and enthusiasts

Good evening all of you.

It is wonderful to be among such a unique gathering of brilliant minds !

I would like to thank Mr. Jalling for inviting us here this evening.

I like traveling to Malmö - a city with a long history and modern vibe. An international melting pot full of young energy ! And now looking at hosting Eurovision soon !

Congratulations to Organisers & sponsors of the tournament as it has completed three decades.

The list of star players who have played at this tournament over the years is truly impressive. I see that Gukesh too was here last year alongwith Arjun.

The appeal of Chess is growing fast.

Technology is transforming the game. Online chess and streaming are booming. FIDE says that millions of people play chess daily.

Chess has been around for a really long time.

Its origins are traced to India nearly 1,500 years ago. I understand that the Vikings also played some *tavl* (hnefatafl) games.

Moving out of India on global trading routes of the time, chess travelled far and wide, east and west, catching imagination across empires and continents.

As it travelled, chess continued to evolve and became a global game.

Around 200 years ago chess clubs and tournaments started in the West.

The Swedish Chess Federation is more than 100 years old. FIDE was one of the first international sporting federations to be established a century ago.

Three years ago, recognising the global appeal and value of chess, the United Nations designated 10 July as the World Chess Day. According to UN 600 million adults play chess regularly !

Chess is fast catching up in India.

India's first International Master Manuel Aron played Bobby Fischer in Stockholm in 1962. More than 25 years later, Vishwanathan Anand became India's first Grandmaster and a decade later went on to become the World Chess Champion for the first time in the year 2000. *I was based in Tehran at the time.*

Vishy Anand fired the imagination of young Indians and now there are more than 80 Indian Grandmasters, of which around 50 have qualified in the last ten years alone. A chess revolution is underway in India. Arjun is among the leaders.

And, only last Sunday, Gukesh created history by becoming the youngest Contender ever for World Championship.

Chess is special in many ways.

Mostly an individual sport, it is also played in a Team format.

Both young and old can compete across the chess board, and while there are different streams for men and women, they can also compete with each other on equal terms.

I remember in our family we were introduced to chess by one of our aunts and we loved playing against our grandfather during summer holidays.

Online play has erased boundaries. Not only geographical but boundaries of gender, age, physical ability.

Although AI-led computers can easily outplay humans, this has not at all diminished the interest in chess.

Chess formats continue to evolve – some becoming unbelievably fast and furious! They require much different skills and styles of play.

Steaming by experts and access to chess engines is fuelling interest and opportunity to understand the game.

Young influencers like Anna Cramling or Tanya Sachdev have huge international following.

Chess is also attracting much greater corporate interest as its young fan base continues to increase.

Tata Steel Chess is already well known as the Wimbledon of Chess and now Tech Mahindra Chess League has started in association with FIDE. Both these companies are also present in Sweden.

Chess helps build bridges.

In Stockholm we have organised special events around Chess, including an exciting simul with Praggnanandhaa and Raunak Sadhwani. We have hosted the renowned Indian chess coach Ramesh Babu and young players not only from Sweden but from other European countries.

At the Rilton Cup I had the exciting opportunity to very briefly meet Nils Grandelius. Most of the players at that tournament were from India !

And I must say that it has been a privilege to interact with the chess legend Pia Cramling during our stay in Sweden. It was remarkable to see her win Gold at the Chennai Chess Olympiad in India.

Our Best wishes to all the players and complements to the Organisers.

Lycka till !

Thank you.
