

Special Event
BUILDING BRIDGES WITH CHESS
Stockholm
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Remarks
Ambassador Tanmaya Lal

Mr. Jesper Hall, Mr. Ramesh Babu

Good to see all the young chess players not only from Sweden but also from Norway, Denmark, France, Spain, Poland, Israel and England.

We are delighted to welcome you all at the Indian Embassy.

Some of you may be wondering how the Indian Embassy is hosting you this evening.

We have been engaging with the Swedish chess ecosystem for some time now.

Ramesh Babu has been visiting Sweden partnering his Swedish friends. **Indian players** are traveling in larger numbers to Sweden to compete in chess tournaments. Swedish legend **Pia Cramling** won a Gold at the Chennai Chess Olympiad in India last November. Her daughter Anna has lot of followers in India.

And, chess is **beautiful game**, and a **global game**.
Chess has been around for a **really long time**. Much longer than other sports.

The game of chess is believed to have originated in **India** nearly one thousand five hundred years ago. This was **before the Viking age** started here in Sweden.

The game then travelled on **global trading routes** far and wide, east and west, catching imagination across empires and continents.

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

FIDE was one of first international sporting federations to be established 100 years ago. **Swedish Chess Federation** is also more than 100 years old. And today FIDE website says that **millions** of people play chess daily.

Three years ago, recognising the global appeal and value of chess, the United Nations designated **10 July** as the **World Chess Day**. The UN website says that as many as **600 million** adults play chess regularly.

Chess is catching up fast in **India**. India's first International Master **Manuel Aron** played Bobby Fischer in Stockholm in 1962. The first Indian grandmaster was

Vishwanathan Anand who picked up the title 35 years ago. *I was based in Tehran when he became the World Champion there for the first time.* Now there are more than 80 Indian grandmasters, of which around 50 have qualified in the last ten years alone. Chess has so many unique aspects.

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 my family we were taught to play chess by one of our aunts and we loved playing our grandfather during summer holidays.

Chess can **empower** players from less privileged backgrounds. Some of you may be aware of inspirational stories like Queen of Katwe about a young Ugandan chess prodigy.

Online play has further erased boundaries.

Technology is also completely transforming the game.

And although AI-led computers can now easily outplay humans, this has not diminished the interest in chess.

Chess formats continue to evolve – some becoming **fast and furious** and requiring much **different skills and styles** of play.

Most of you are playing in this **new and even more exciting era** of chess.

Popularity of chess is booming globally with **shorter formats and online play**.

Streaming by experts and **access to chess engines** also generates huge interest and opportunity to understand the game more widely.

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

Chess is finally attracting **corporate interest** also as it continues to increase its fan base. **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 Indian companies are also present in **Sweden**.

All these efforts **also help build bridges** in these difficult times.

We hope that this interaction also contributes to such efforts – to **build friendships and understanding** among peoples and cultures.

So welcome again, all you chess lovers at the Indian Embassy.

