

SQUARE OFF: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON INDIA HOSTING 44TH CHESS OLYMPIAD

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Human resources, Youth, Sports and related issues

A nation brimming with chess talent is now ready to parade it on a platform that does not get any bigger. The [44th Chess Olympiad](#), with participants from 187 nations, opens with a gala ceremony at Chennai's Nehru Stadium on Thursday and the 11-round on-board action commences the following day at Mamallapuram. With the usual medal-winning nations — Russia and China — not in the mix, some first-timers could occupy the podium. The greatest of current players, [Magnus Carlsen](#), is looking to lead Norway to its first medal. There will be other illustrious performers in both sections of the biennial competition, but the discerning would focus on how India performs at home. Being the host, India could field two teams in each section. As there were an odd number of entries, India added a third team to make it even. As a result, 30 players, including 15 women, will [represent India](#) in the premier world team championship. Though [Viswanathan Anand](#) is the mentor for these teams, the Indian men are strong enough to be seeded second in the Open section. The Indian women, looking for their first medal, are seeded first. Talented teens [D. Gukesh](#), Arjun Erigaisi, Nihal Sarin and R. Praggnanandhaa earned their stripes to be on the biggest stage. It remains to be seen whether they play according to their growing reputation.

On the organisational front, the Olympiad promises to be a success. Once Russia was out of the Olympiad both as a host and a participant, the magnitude of what the Tamil Nadu Government and the All India Chess Federation (AICF) have accomplished in setting up this mega event in just four months of getting the hosting rights is hard to comprehend. On getting Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's approval, the bureaucracy turned a vision into reality by taking care of every logistical aspect. The World Chess Federation (FIDE) is already fine-tuning the arrangements, including the two playing halls that will accommodate about 1,400 players, with live broadcast of games from about 700 boards in each round. The Indian technicians are set to raise the bar to a new high. Elsewhere, no effort is being spared to showcase the rich culture and heritage of the country with the focus being on the home State. A team of over 500 volunteers have been trained to handle various needs of the visiting contingents. Security personnel and health workers are in place to meet any contingency. But for those from the AICF who have worked round-the-clock for four months after shifting base to Mamallapuram, all the effort would be worth it only if the Indian teams come up with medal-winning performances.

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