

Viswanathan Anand addresses online session for SAI officials from Germany , says the apex sports body can contribute greatly in promoting chess in India

New Delhi, April 22: Indian sports legend Viswanathan Anand who is a former multiple-time world champion, former World Number 1 and a Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Awardee, today addressed the newly-appointed Assistant Directors of the Sports Authority of India in a special online session from Germany.

Speaking at the session he shared his experience of nearly four decades of playing chess, how the game has changed over the years with advanced technology and also how the Sports Authority of India can help in building up budding chess players in the country.

Addressing the newly-appointed administrators, Anand said Sports Authority of India can make a big difference towards promoting chess as a sport in India. "SAI already has facilities and infrastructure for training. It would be of great help to budding chess players if SAI could give them access to special Chess Computers in these facilities since most players don't have access to these."

Anand, who has been in Germany since the Corona pandemic broke out and lockdown was announced in various countries, including India, has said that he goes for long walks during this lean period. However, he is also known to take up physical fitness sessions all year round. Speaking about the importance of fitness in a sport like Chess which is perceived as a sport of the mind, Anand urged young chess players to go to SAI centres and keep their physical fitness at par with their mental fitness, "Fitness is not a problem when you are young, but it becomes a factor when you start getting older. Go for a week to a SAI facility and take up fitness with athletes from other sports," Anand said.

Anand had a special word of caution for young chess players and parents when it comes to taking up the sport as a career and urged them not to rush into a decision saying, "Children should not make a decision on a full-time career in chess till the age of 18, till you finish your studies. In chess you do not have to turn professional. I get worried if 12-13 year olds want to take up full-time chess careers. In all professions, uncertainty is very high, parents should give the child the flexibility to decide what they want to do."

Asked by one of the participants in the session if Covid19 has popularised online chess, Anand said, "Online chess has always been popular but we are hearing far more of it now because of the pandemic and the lockdown. However, what needs to be seen now is if we can improve the level of these online competitions. In a few weeks from now we will compete in the Online Nations Cup which will see teams from four countries and two continents participating. With technology, everything is possible now."

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