

**Ambassador's Remarks at the Closing Ceremony of Chess Tournament organized by Mahatma Gandhi School, Almaty (Conference Hall, Oct 5, 2015, 1500 hrs)**

Esteemed Mr. Zhienbayev Erulan, Head Teacher of the Mahatma Gandhi School, Mr. Zhambylov Baimurat, Second Secretary of Bostandyk Region "Nur Otan" Party, Mr. Birtaliyev Sayan, Head, Sport and Tourism Department of Almaty City Education Management, Mr. Kim Sergey, Executive Director, Almaty City Chess Federation, distinguished guests, the winners and participants of the Chess Tournament and dear students,

I am delighted to be here today at the closing ceremony of the fifth Mahatma Gandhi Chess Tournament.

I am happy to note that the school has been organizing the Chess tournament on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi every year over the last four years.

The Chess is an ancient game believed to have originated in India. Many famous Indian chess players like Grandmaster Vishwanathan Anand are associated with the game. It is one of the best sports to exercise the most important organ of our bodies: the brain. It improves lifelong mental health and a beautiful mind is one of the greatest assets of a human being. Among its numerous benefits, it promotes brain growth; it exercises both sides of the brain; raises IQ; sparks creativity; increases problem-solving skills; teaches planning and foresight; improves concentration and reading skills; improves memory and enhances willpower.

I am glad that a large number of children in Almaty take interest in the game and have participated in the Chess competition this year.

The Chess competition on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary reminds us of the teachings of this great man. Mahatma Gandhi stood for the ideals of Ahimsa (Non-Violence), Satya (Truthfulness), Asteya (honesty), Aparigrah (non-possessiveness) and Brahmacharya (celibacy), both in theory and practice.

Although Mahatma Gandhi was not the originator of the principle of nonviolence, he was the first one to apply it successfully in the modern political landscape at a large scale. At the heart of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence was his belief that strength comes from righteousness, not force, power comes from truth, not might, victory comes from moral courage, not by imposed submission. He said, "Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man".

It was through the force of his teachings, his words, his ideas, his own life and personal example that he was able to move the whole nation and people of India as one, ultimately winning India's independence in 1947. Mahatma Gandhi inspired independence and civil rights movements using the strategy of non-violence across the globe.

So great was the influence of Mahatma Gandhi that the famous scientist, Albert Einstein said about him, "Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a man as this one ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth."

More recently, speaking before India's Parliament in November 2010, President Obama said, "I am mindful that I might not be standing before you today, as the President of the United States, had it not been for Gandhi and the message he shared with and inspired America and the World".

This shows that Mahatma Gandhi had not only shaped India's past but also remained relevant in the contemporary world. He rightly said that one must be the change, which one wishes to see in the world. Gandhi used to say I have nothing new to teach the world, Truth and Non Violence are as old as Himalayas. Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.

His message of non-violence is essential to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and harmony across nations and has been embraced by many countries and people around the world. Over 150 countries have depicted Gandhi on their postal stamps and over 70 countries have installed statues of Mahatma Gandhi.

I am immensely glad that Government of Kazakhstan has been at the forefront in recognizing his contribution and honouring this great man. Not only this proud school and adjoining street were named after Mahatma Gandhi, the Government of Kazakhstan issued a postage stamp on Mahatma Gandhi on his 125th birth anniversary two decades ago and a full-length statue of Mahatma Gandhi was installed in Almaty at a park named after him on Shivchenko Street in October 2003.

I wish to conclude by saying that Gandhi's life, ideas and work are of crucial importance to all those who want to make a better world. The ideals he stood for are universal in character in both space and time. They shall remain relevant across generations and continue to offer solutions to the challenges faced by the humanity.

This reminds me of the advice Gandhiji gave to his grandson shortly before his assassination. He asked him to avoid the seven sins:

- Politics without principle
- Pleasure without conscience
- Knowledge without character
- Commerce without morality
- Science without humanity
- Wealth without work
- Worship without sacrifice

With this, I thank the Mahatma Gandhi School and Almaty City Chess Federation for organizing this annual chess competition and giving me this opportunity to speak to you. I am confident that such events will further strengthen the close and friendly relations between our countries. I congratulate all the winners of the Chess competition.

Thank you.