



Major Dhyan Chand Scholarship Award for SOG Grandmasters Winners Announced To Elevate Mind Sports in India

28.80 lac worth of scholarships to be given to 48 zonal winners of SOG Grandmasters 2024,
who will also contest the National Finals

Bengaluru, December 19, 2024: The inaugural South Zonal Finals of the SOG Grandmasters Series, hosted by the Skillhub Online Games Federation (SOGF) on Wednesday and Thursday, showcased strategy, skill, and cognitive excellence in the first-ever on-ground competition, while the winners across three mind sports categories of eChess, Blind Chess and Rummy also secured the Major Dhyan Chand Scholarship and spots in the National Finals to be held in New Delhi next year.

The South Zonal Finals were held at Sheraton Grand, Whitefield, Bengaluru, in a glittering ceremony graced by esteemed dignitaries, including the Governor of Karnataka, Hon'ble Thawar Chand Gehlot, former Indian cricketer Robin Uthappa, and Arjun Awardee and 1972 Munich Olympic Medallist Ashok Dhyan Chand, son of the legendary Major Dhyan Chand. Together, they unveiled the coveted SOG Grandmasters Cup and announced the prestigious Major Dhyan Chand Scholarship, aimed at uplifting mind sports talents. The scholarship will provide year-long assistance to 12 winners from each zone, amounting to a total of INR 28.80 lac.

The Honorable Governor, Mr Thawar Chand Gehlot, expressed his delight at the initiative: *"It is encouraging to see mind sports gaining the recognition they deserve through platforms like the SOG Grandmasters Series that SOGF has launched. This initiative goes beyond celebrating talent and actively nurtures the next generation of champions, showcasing the vital role mind sports can play in fostering holistic development. And through the Major Dhyan Chand scholarship, these winners will go on to encourage more individuals to embrace mind sports as a meaningful and serious pursuit."*

Mr Shankar Aggarwal, President of SOGF, emphasised the event's success: *"The remarkable talent and enthusiasm displayed at the South Zonal Finals highlight the growing prominence of mind sports in India and reaffirm our commitment to fostering this skill-based domain. The players showcased not only exceptional abilities but also unwavering focus and determination, reflecting the true spirit of mind sports. Through the Major Dhyan Chand scholarship, we aim to further uplift mind sports by providing critical support to the players, and with three more zones to go and the West Zonal Finals up next, we eagerly anticipate even higher levels of competition as we progress toward the National Finals."*

A total of 132 players competed for the top spots across the Indian Chess Masters, the Indian Chess Masters for the Blind and the Indian Rummy Grandmasters.



Mr Ashok Dhyan Chand, a former hockey player and Arjuna awardee, added: "By introducing this scholarship, we aim to honour my father, Major Dhyan Chand's legacy while empowering exceptional players to overcome challenges and advance in their mind sports journey. Initiatives like these are crucial to ensuring that mind sports receive the recognition and support they truly deserve in India, fostering a brighter future for this growing field."

The action now shifts to the West Zonal Finals of the SOGF Grandmasters Series to be played in Mumbai next year followed by the North and the East Zonal Finals slated to take place in the months ahead. These regional competitions are building up to the highly anticipated National Finals, scheduled for April 2025 in New Delhi.

About SOGF:

The Skillhub Online Games Federation (SOGF) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting and developing esports and skilled online gaming in India. With a focus on building a vibrant esports ecosystem, SOGF works to nurture talent and create opportunities for players and fans alike. Through key partnerships, such as the collaboration with the International Esports Federation (IESF), International Mind Sports Association (IMSA) and Global Esports Federation (GEF) to bring an international tournament to India, SOGF is positioning the country as a key player in the global esports and skilled online gaming arena.