

Vishy wows school kids

ARTS

Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand, who inaugurated the CII-NIIT Digi-Art Festival-iPaint 08, was accorded a grand welcome generally reserved for movie stars



IF you think movie stars are the only ones being mobbed – newsflash for you: World Chess Champions get mobbed even more in Chennai, especially when they're making their first public appearance after having won the title third time in a row, fresh from Bonn, Germany.

To say that the mood was upbeat at the Convention Centre, Chennai Trade Centre, at the CII-NIIT Digi-Art Festival, iPaint 08 – to be presided over by Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand – wouldn't be giving it due credit. A swarm of school students, all holding placards

that shouted, "Welcome Vishy, King of Kings!" clung to the Chess Champion as he stepped out of the car – and the deluge was far from over as the crowd swept into the Convention Centre. Enthusiastic children and over-eager parents spilled over to the guest of honour every few seconds, asking autographs, while the NIIT volunteers had a tough time reining them all in.

This year, iPaint 08, an annual digital painting competition organised across schools on a national level, received a record 80,000 entries from across schools in Assam, Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh – made possible by the



a throne and 'crowned' right royally, before being given their prizes. "I'm really glad of the reception to this contest – I think it will help children discover the technology and use it better," he said, adding that he congratulated the children who had won.

Later, at a press conference, Anand commented on everything from the current status of Indian sports to how he'd balanced sports and studies as a child. "I'd love to see Chess included in the Olympics," he said, when asked if this would become a possibility. To the question of why chess was identified much more as an urban game rather than a rural one, he replied that steps were already taken to change that status quo. "Exposure to chess has increased in places like Assam, Chattisgrah, places in the

North, North East," he explained.

Now that he'd paying playing continuously for 3 years, would he consider a small break?

"My next tournament is in February, he said. "So December would probably be a good time for a short break, yes."

As student journalists from Chandamama asked him about the pranks he'd played – there would be none as it was considered risky business – Anand answered patiently, if a little amused at their forthrightness.

The deluge of questions might have come to an end – but the quest for autographs still came thick and fast. Vishy was more than ever, in the hearts of Chennaiites, the King of Kings.

Green initiative, where paintings by students are uploaded by the schools on a specially created site. The winners were judged across three categories: Sub Junior, Junior and Senior. P Rajendran, Chief operating Officer, NIIT and Pradipa K Mohapatra, Chairman, Kidex 2008, both present at the event, were vocal in their praise for both

the children who had delivered such creative entries, as well as the World Chess Champion.

The star of the afternoon, though, was Vishy Anand himself – with anticipation rising to a fever pitch when a small compilation video of his successes was displayed. As the winning children were asked to the stage, Anand was seated on

