

From One Man's Vision to a Shared Dream: Somaiya Vidyavihar University Opens the 2026 FISU World University Championship Squash

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Every institution has defining moments, but the ones that leave a lasting legacy are shaped by a vision carried forward across generations. Long before athletes from 14 nations arrived in Mumbai for the 2026 FISU World University Championship Squash, Shri K J Somaiya believed education should create opportunities that extended beyond the classroom. That belief shaped an institution where learning was never confined to academics alone, but embraced culture, sport and experiences that prepare students for life. Over the

decades, that vision has been nurtured by people who believed in it, growing through shared dreams, collective effort and trust. As Somaiya Vidyavihar University inaugurated the 2026 FISU World University Championship Squash, that journey reached another significant milestone.



Somaiya Vidyavihar University welcomes the world to the campus

Over the next seven days, Brazil, the People's Republic of China, Czechia, Spain, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Hong Kong China, Hungary, New Zealand, Poland, South Africa, Singapore, Switzerland and the host nation India will compete on Somaiya Vidyavihar University's World Squash Federation-certified courts. Yet the significance of the championship extends beyond the competition itself.

For the athletes, it is an opportunity to represent their

countries on one of the world's premier stages for university sport. More than 120 student volunteers from colleges across India, including 60–70 from Mumbai, came together to support the championship alongside thousands of young people on campus. A world championship is no longer an event happening elsewhere; it is unfolding right here in Mumbai at their very own Somaiya Vidyavihar University. It is an opportunity to witness international competition firsthand, contribute to an event of global significance and recognise that a university campus can be a place where world-class sporting moments are experienced, organised and created.

Somaiya Vidyavihar University has consistently invested in sporting infrastructure, athlete development and competitive pathways that enable students to pursue excellence in both academics and sport. From hosting national university championships and developing World Squash Federation-certified courts to supporting the Indian university squash contingent, it has created an environment where aspiring athletes can compete at the highest levels while continuing their education. Hosting the 2026 FISU World University Championship Squash is therefore not an isolated milestone, but the culmination of years of sustained institutional commitment to university sport.

For **Samir Somaiya, Chancellor, Somaiya Vidyavihar University**, the championship carries an equally personal significance. Having played squash for more than four decades, including during his years as a student overseas, he has long believed that a sport often associated with private clubs and limited access should be accessible within a university campus. His conviction has shaped the University's approach to sport, where every student is encouraged to participate in at least one sporting discipline and the world-class Somaiya Sports

Academy, Eklavya, has been developed to ensure access and opportunity are available to all. Hosting the championship represents not only another institutional milestone, but also another step in fulfilling a promise that began decades ago.

"When I went abroad to study, my grandfather asked me to build a university like the one I wanted to study in. Hosting the FISU World University Championship Squash is one more step in fulfilling that promise. Sport teaches us far more than winning. It teaches us to compete with ourselves, to work together, to lead, to lose with grace and to grow as individuals. Those are opportunities every student deserves. That is why sport is an integral part of education at Somaiya." – **Samir Somaiya, Chancellor, Somaiya Vidyavihar University.**

As squash prepares for its Olympic debut at the Los Angeles 2028 Games, events such as the FISU World University Championship create important pathways for student-athletes to compete internationally while continuing their education. They also reflect the increasingly important role universities play in developing sporting talent, investing in world-class infrastructure and strengthening the future of sport. Hosting the championship reinforces both Somaiya Vidyavihar University's commitment to university sport and India's growing stature as a destination for international sporting events.

Welcoming the athletes, officials and delegates, **Professor Vinay Kumar Pathak, President, Association of Indian Universities**, reflected on the role universities play in shaping not only accomplished scholars but responsible citizens. Drawing upon the story of Eklavya, he described

education as a journey where determination triumphs over privilege. He reaffirmed that sport remains one of the greatest classrooms for resilience, teamwork and character.

In India's ancient tradition, sport has always been far more than a means to stay fit or compete. It is a way to discover one's potential, build character and realise one's true purpose. Sport teaches us how to work together, grow together and achieve together, lessons that extend far beyond the playing field. That is why I believe every university should make sport an integral part of education, helping students develop not only as scholars, but also as responsible individuals and members of society."

Representing FISU, Martin Dalton, Executive Committee Senior Member, reflected on the journey that brought the championship to Mumbai and acknowledged the partnership between Somaiya Vidyavihar University, the Association of Indian Universities and the many organisations that worked together to make the event possible. He commended the University's commitment to delivering an international championship that reflects the highest standards of university sport and encouraged every athlete to embrace not only the competition but also the cultural experience that India has to offer. *"Right from the onset of the event's attribution, the organising committee, led by our gracious host, Somaiya Vidyavihar University, supported by the Association of Indian Universities and the many event partners, have shared one dream, epitomised by the slogan, 'Smashing Barriers, Uniting Nations.' My FISU colleagues and I truly appreciate the efforts taken to make the event one of the best FISU World Championships held this year."*

Declaring the championship officially open, **Shri Venugopal Reddy, Additional Chief Secretary, Higher and Technical Education Department, Government of Maharashtra**, welcomed the international contingent to Mumbai and described the event as an expression of India's enduring philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—the world is one family. He expressed confidence that the championship would foster lasting friendships and strengthen the bonds between young people from across the world through the spirit of sport.

"It is indeed a matter of pride, not only for Somaiya Vidyavihar University but also for Mumbai city, and I think I can include our department as well in taking pride in organising this event. I am sure the sporting event will build lasting relations between the sportspersons of the various nations and will bring lasting friendships in the course of the tournament."

The opening ceremony also celebrated the cultural exchange that lies at the heart of the FISU movement. Through an evocative sand art performance, acclaimed artist Nitish Bharati brought to life India's rich heritage, timeless traditions, spirit of learning, sporting excellence and warm hospitality, culminating in Somaiya Vidyavihar University's journey to hosting the 2026 FISU World University Championship Squash in Mumbai. This was followed by The Golden Bird – A Journey Across Cultures, a vibrant cultural production celebrating India's diversity while reflecting the friendship and cultural exchange that define the FISU movement. Representatives from FISU also commended Somaiya Vidyavihar University, the Association of Indian Universities and the organising committee for delivering a championship marked by world-class facilities, dedicated volunteers and the warmth of Indian hospitality.

Behind the ceremony, however, was another story, one that unfolded long before the first delegation arrived in Mumbai. Months of preparation by the organising committee, coaches, staff and more than 120 student volunteers transformed an ambitious vision into an international championship. For many of the volunteers, it was their first experience of delivering an event of this scale. For the organising team, it was the culmination of years of planning, collaboration and belief that a university campus could successfully host the world.

That spirit found its most heartfelt expression during the ceremony itself. Stepping away from the prepared programme, Samir Somaiya invited Aazaz Khan, Director, Somaiya Sports Academy, onto the stage in recognition of the team behind the championship. It was a reminder that institutions are not built by individuals alone. They are built by people who choose to believe in a shared purpose and work together to realise it. Aazaz Khan acknowledged the collective effort that made the championship possible and thanked the Association of Indian Universities and FISU for placing their trust in Somaiya Vidyavihar University, describing the championship as the outcome of a shared vision realised through teamwork.

The University also acknowledged the support of its partners in bringing the championship to life. **One8**, the Official India Jersey Partner, proudly supports Team India as it competes on home soil. **Taj The Trees, Mumbai**, is hosting athletes, officials and delegates from around the world, reflecting the warmth and professionalism with which India welcomes international sporting events.

As the ceremony concluded, the celebrations gave way to competition. Over the coming week, champions will be crowned, and medals will be awarded, but the championship has already achieved something that will endure far beyond the final match. It has shown how a vision can be carried across generations, how dreams grow stronger when they are shared, and how trust between mentors and students, institutions and partners, organisers and volunteers, and universities and young athletes can create opportunities that inspire far beyond the boundaries of sport.

For one week, Mumbai becomes the meeting point of global university sport. Long after the final point is played, the 2026 FISU World University Championship Squash will be remembered not only for the competition it hosted, but for the belief it reaffirmed—that universities are places where opportunity is created, where communities come together to build something greater than themselves, and where a single vision, shared across generations, can inspire countless futures.

Please Note: Fans around the world can watch the Opening and Closing Ceremonies and live championship matches across [FISU TV](#), [SquashTV](#), [Prasar Bharati](#), [Waves OTT](#), and [India Squash TV](#).

About FISU

Since its founding in 1949, the International University Sports Federation is the key driver to expand the role and reach of university sport around the world. FISU serves as the global platform for world university sport at all levels through sport events, educational initiatives and wellbeing. Together with its members and continental organisations, FISU supports students, connects universities and leads cultural

exchange. FISU fosters academic-athletic balance and promotes wellbeing, respect, excellence and inclusion for generations to come. www.fisu.net

About Association of Indian Universities AIU

The Association of Indian Universities (AIU) is the apex National Sports Promotion Organization (NSPO) for university sports in India and one of the largest associations of universities in the world, representing 1,200+ member universities. For over nine decades, AIU has played a pivotal role in promoting university sports, identifying grassroots sporting talent, and providing a structured pathway for student-athletes to excel at the national and international levels.

As the country's largest organized university sports ecosystem, AIU conducts 230+ Inter-University Tournaments annually across 58 sports disciplines at the zonal and national levels. Through the active participation of 1,100+ universities, 47,000+ affiliated colleges, and 25,000+ colleges in inter-collegiate competitions, AIU provides competitive opportunities to more than 2.2 million student-athletes from a base of over one crore college students.

AIU serves as the primary feeder system for India's national and international multi-sport events by nurturing emerging talent, fostering excellence in sports, and strengthening the university sports movement across the country. In collaboration with its member universities, AIU continues to create opportunities for student-athletes to represent India with distinction on global sporting platforms. aiu.ac.in

About Somaiya Vidyavihar University

Somaiya Vidyavihar University (Accredited with an A Grade by NAAC), established in 2019, is a leading multidisciplinary university in India, built upon the 84-year legacy of Somaiya Vidyavihar. Its approach to education is centred on **पेशा** (profession), **मानस** (mindset), and **व्यक्तित्व** (character), preparing students to excel in their chosen fields while empowering them to embrace endless possibilities.

The University offers undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral, and professional programmes across disciplines including Engineering & Technology, Management, Commerce & Business Studies, Basic & Applied Sciences, Education, Humanities & Social Sciences, Design, Film, Music & Performing Arts, Sports, Dharma Studies, Civilisation Studies, Languages & Literature, and Library & Information Science. Through interdisciplinary learning, research, industry partnerships, experiential education, and a vibrant startup incubation ecosystem, Somaiya Vidyavihar University empowers students to transform knowledge into meaningful impact for society.
www.somaiya.edu.

