Uzbekistan Olympiad 2026 Reflections (2) by Dr Lyndon Bouah

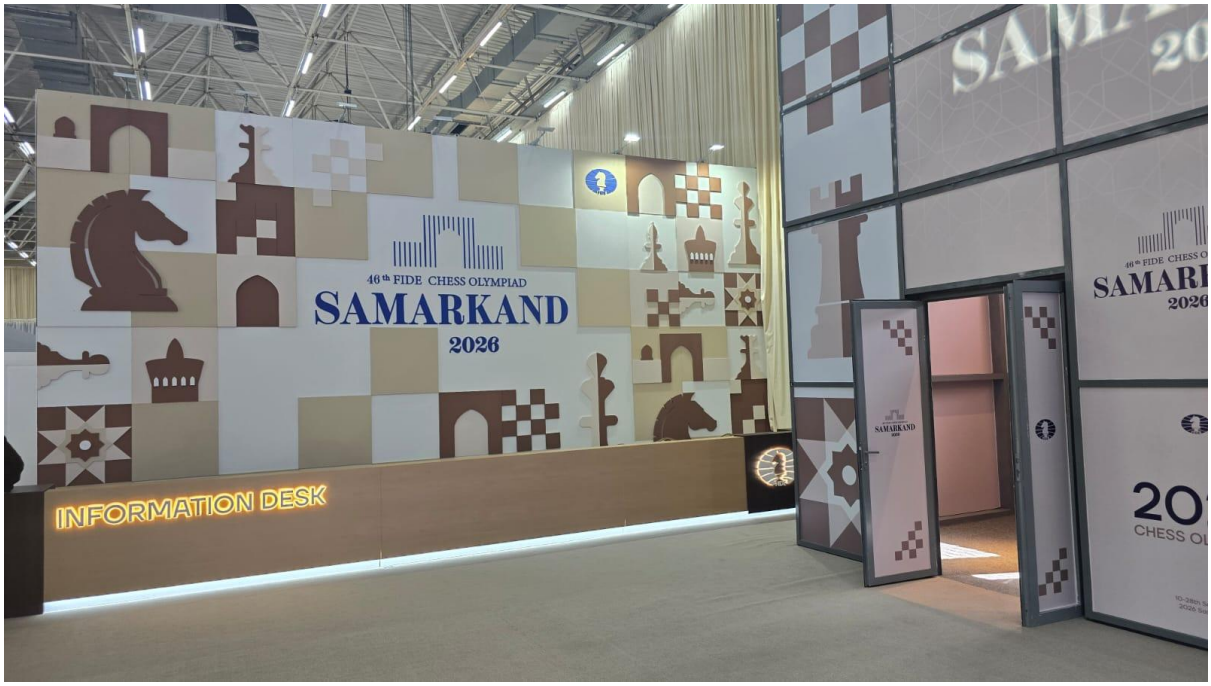
Greetings family, friends, colleagues and the broader chess community from Uzbekistan.

The 2026 Chess Olympiad is being held in Samarkand in Uzbekistan. 200 countries from across the world have gathered to play in this prestigious event. Uzbekistan is in Central Asia, in the heart of the ancient Silk Road region.









Uzbekistan's form of government is a republic. The population is about 38.2 million people, most of whom are Uzbeks. The official language is Uzbek, while Russian and English are also widely used, especially in business, tourism and education. Uzbek cuisine has developed over centuries and reflects the traditions of Central Asian Culture. The most famous national dish is plov (pilaf), made from rice, meat, carrots, and spices. Other popular dishes include shashlik (kebaks), manti (steamed dumplings), lagman noodles and samsa pastries. Bread called "non" is an essential part of every meal. I had plov several times and I quite enjoyed it. Thus far it is my favourite dish. Most meals are full of vegetables.

I had an occasion to visit the Registan Square in Samarkand. Registan Square is the symbol of Samarkand and a jewel of Eastern architectural heritage. The magnificent ensemble, consisting of the Ulugh Beg Madrasah, Sher-Doh Madrasah , and Tilya- Kori Madrasah dates back to the 15-th 17 centuries and once served as a major centre of science, education and state administration.





The word Registan means sandy place. In 2001 these madrasahs were inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO. Today Registan Square stands as the most famous cultural and tourist landmark in Samarkand, attracting visitors from around the world with its majestic beauty and historical significance.

Denise and I had a guide show us the entire complex. He explained to us that the madrasahs were like two universities similar to Harvard and Oxford. Young boys from an early age spent about ten years studying there before returning home to all parts of the empire.

We also attended the great lights show that happens each night at 21h00pm.

Some of the readers have asked me about Grenada. So here are some facts

The capital is St George's.



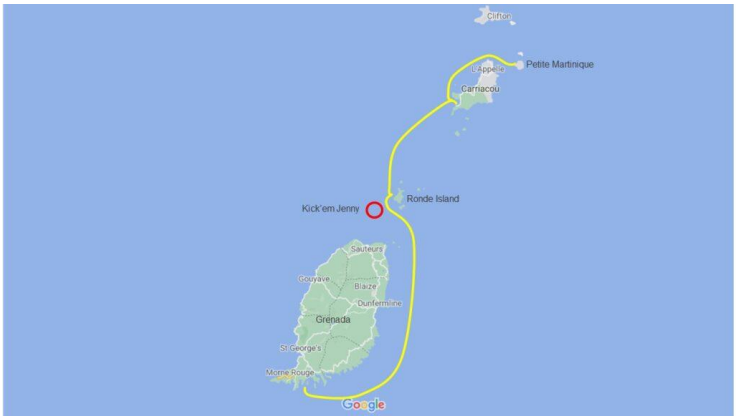
The population is roughly 125 000.

The official language is English.

The Currency is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar.

Grenada is known as the Spice Isle because it produces large amounts of nutmeg and mace.

The country consists of three islands - Grenada, Carriacoou and Petite Martinique.



Cricket is one of the most popular sports, much like South Africa.

The climate is tropical with a rainy season from June to November.

Tourism is one of the country's biggest industries.

In 1978 the activist and novelist Alex la Guma (1925 to 1985) published a book called **Soviet Journey,** a memoir of his travels in the Soviet Union. Today it stands as one of the longest and most substantive first-hand accounts of the USSR by an African writer. I recently attended the book launch of, **"The early writings of Alex La Guma** by Andre Odendaal and Roger Field" (Best Red, 2025). The above authors tell us that La Guma was born in District 6 and wrote many seminal novels. He later died in Cuba in 1985.

La Guma is quite possibly the first South African to have visited Uzbekistan. He writes about the worker uprisings in Tashkent in 1917 and he notes that proverbs are used quite often. When he meets old friends Yashen and Babjan, Babajan tells him, "We are glad to see you. As they say in Karakalpakia, a coat is best when it is new, but an old friend is better as he becomes older'!

Besides the spirit of Alex La Guma that is accompanying us in Uzbekistan, I also have the latest book written about the Silk Road by Professor Peter Frankopan. Professor Frankopan writes in the Introduction that the best capture of the cosmopolitanism and connections of the Silk Roads, are the famous paintings in the "Hall of Ambassadors" that were excavated in the 1960's in an aristocratic house in Afrasiab, the old city in Samarkand. Samarkand was the leading city-state of Sogdiana in Central Asia in late antiquity, described by the Chinese monk Xuanzang who visited in the early seventh century as "a great commercial entrpot... its inhabitants were skilful craftsmen, smart and energetic.

Grenada played Somalia in the Open section. Some very interesting games! Here is their **round two** results:

Bo.	198	Grenada (GRN)	Rtg -	148	Somalia (SOM)	Rtg	0 : 4
		(c) Lyndon Bouah			(c) Mustafa Mohamoud Farah		
95.1		□ Renniel, Gilbert	1848 -	CM	■ Abdulkadir, Mohamed Warsame	2013	0 - 1
95.2		■ Roberts, Gennard	1564 -	CM	□ Ali Abdullahi, Farah	1923	0 - 1
95.3		□ Pope, Omario	1431 -		■ Islam Sh.Nour, Kassim	1943	0 - 1
95.4		■ Mendez, Vladimir	1651 -		□ Mahad, Dahir Muhumad	1829	0 - 1

Grenada played well against Somalia and gave everyone a run for their money. Games went down to the wire!

In the Women section Grenada women played Cape Verde. Here is their **round two** results:

Bo.	126	Cape Verde (CPV)	Rtg -	172	Grenada (GRN)	Rtg	3 : 1
		(c) Diogo Alexandre Neves			(c) Denise Bouah		
77.1	WCM	□ Rodriguez Guevara, Celia M.	1811 -		■ Rhonda, J Lambert	1577	0 - 1
77.2	WCM	■ Pereira, Deise	1784 -		□ Achazia, N.A.Lewis	0	1 - 0
77.3	WCM	□ Almeida, Jacira Laura	1598 -		■ Senthilkumar, Abiramy	0	1 - 0
77.4	WCM	■ Moreno, Akiane	1526 -		□ Tehalyani, Kenishka	0	1 - 0

We scored our first game point when Rhonda Lambert beat her Capo Verde opponent. The opponent was a WCM and was 1800. Rhonda did well!

The SA Open team played against Austria in round 2 today. In 2016 SA scored a huge upset when they beat Austria. IM Daniel Cawdrey was the star of the day when he brilliantly beat GM David Shengalia. IM Donovan van Den Heever also won on the day and IM Watu Kobese drew. On top board, GM Kenny who is now the coach and captain of the women's team drew with 2700 rated GM Markus Ragger. Here is their **round two** results:

Bo.	27	Austria (AUT)	Rtg -	77	South Africa (RSA)	Rtg	4 : 0
		(c) Ferenc Berkes			(c) Henry Robert Steel		
27.1	GM	□ Alekseenko, Kirill	2656 -	IM	■ Karsten, Jan	2386	1 - 0
27.2	IM	■ Dotzer, Lukas	2472 -	IM	□ Levitan, Caleb Levi	2316	1 - 0
27.3	IM	□ Peyrer, Konstantin	2485 -	FM	■ Mhango, Banele	2354	1 - 0
27.4	GM	■ Baidetskyi, Valentin	2511 -		□ Mnyasta, Chariton	2236	1 - 0

The SA Women team played Peru. Here is their **round two** results:

Bo.	86	South Africa (RSA)	Rtg -	39	Peru (PER)	Rtg	1 : 3
		(c) Kenneth Terence Solomon			(c) Dante Arturo Soto Conde		
39.1	WFM	□ Badenhorst, Chloe	1997 -	IM	■ Cori T., Deysi	2316	0 - 1
39.2	WCM	■ Nel, Hayley	1864 -	WIM	□ Jimenez Salas, Maria Teresa	2184	0 - 1
39.3		□ Klaasen, Robyn Julian	1839 -	FM	■ Contreras Huaman, Fiorella	2168	0 - 1
39.4		■ Masango, Sizakele	1880 -		□ Zarate Oyague, Flor De Maria	2019	1 - 0

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah

Reporting live from Uzbekistan