



PRESS RELEASE

16th October 2022

Bishop Cotton School, Shimla

Jubilee celebrations at Bishop Cotton School for Slater Debates

Bishop Cotton School (BCS), Shimla is preparing to host its Jubilee celebrations of the Rev Dr Samuel Slater Memorial English Debates which started in 1996. The Slater debating contest was set up in memory of the first Head of the legendary boarding school, Rev Dr Samuel Slater, who was Headmaster from 1863-1885.

The prestigious tournament has grown over the years and attracts participants from some of India's most renowned educational institutions. This year BCS will host 31 debating teams on the campus to celebrate 25 years of the inter-school competition in a four-day event starting on 17th October 2022.

One hundred and forty-five debating subjects will be thrashed out by some of the brightest children from classes 10 to 12 across eight venues in the school. Subjects ranging from: 'physical punishment by parents', 'sale of human organs' and 'nuclear war' to the lighter subjects of: 'video games make you smarter' and 'Bollywood is better than Hollywood' and 'social media is making us less social'.

Bishop Cotton School's Director, Mr Simon Weale, said; "This event brings together and celebrates some of the best young minds in India today. The Slater debates embrace the view that life is about learning by disagreeing, in a friendly atmosphere, and that free speech is the best way to gain new knowledge and that censorship is inimical to progress."

The Headmaster Mr Mathew P John who was instrumental in setting up the original debates competition in 1996 said; "We're very excited to be holding the Jubilee celebrations after a Covid break. The debating tournament was inaugurated in 1996 as a platform for young men and women from across the country to interact and build lasting relationships while testing their skill and wits against each other. We're looking forward to some very interesting debates from some talented students."

The event is aimed at providing a significant training ground for the development of communicative abilities of students and to create learning opportunities in which students develop proficiencies based on sound educational and communication theories.

Ends

Attachment – Images: **Bishop Cotton School Debates photos**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE SLATER DEBATES:

Further information or interview opportunities please call BISHOP COTTON SCHOOL, Shimla - 171002 (H.P.) India. Phone : 0177 - 2620880 (6 Lines) Mobile: 8894454565 (Comms) Website: bishopcottonshimla.com

THE SCHOOL HISTORY

Bishop Cotton School was founded in 1859 by the then Metropolitan Bishop of India, who was himself a school teacher by choice and experience.

Revd. Samuel Slater was appointed the first Headmaster of Bishop Cotton School, brought out from St. Paul's School, Darjeeling and went on to serve Bishop Cotton School for twenty years, thereby laying a solid foundation and transforming the school into a prestigious institution which grew to attract students from among the Indian elite seeking to develop Indian leadership. By the turn of the century, the reputation of the school was undeniable and greatly helped by the staff which was mainly educated at Oxford and Cambridge.

The school has had a colourful history of more than 150 years, spanning the Indian freedom movement, both World Wars and Independence. It has transitioned from being a school started solely for the sons of British officers, both civil and military, into a school which is purely Indian, albeit with old 'Public School' traditions and customs, an old-fashioned sense of courtesy and etiquette, coupled with a fiercely competitive spirit in both games as well as other activities. Old Boys have gone on to be successful in whatever they have chosen to do, and many have chosen the 'road less travelled'. However, what sets BCS apart is the amazingly strong fraternal bond that binds the community together, both staff and students, across generations and distances.

THE DEBATES: A HISTORY

In 1995, after 136 years, under the Headmastership of Mr. Kabir K. Mustafi, it was felt that there was a need to bring about an Inter-Public school debating exchange spread over a period of four days to facilitate friendship, exchange of views and ideas with a view to foster student interaction, so that they could gather together and debate on a host of subjects in a friendly and competitive spirit.

Consequently, in 1996, along with the Revd. J. Cherian, Chaplain of the School & Housemaster: Curzon and Mr.M.P.John: Master In- Charge Debates, formal invitations were sent out to the students studying in classes X, XI and XII of Mayo Girls & Boys - Ajmer, Wynberg-Allen - Mussoorie, RIMC- Dehra Dun, Welham Girls- Dehradun, Scindia School- Gwalior, Yadavindra Public School

Patiala, The Doon School- Dehradun, Auckland House School - Shimla and St. Bede's College Shimla to participate in the First Rev. Dr. Samuel Slater Memorial Invitational Inter-school English Debates. The paucity of space within the school premises limited the number of schools that could be invited for the event.

The format of the debates was set on the Cambridge pattern (three speakers for, and three speakers against), to generate a healthy debate on certain prevalent issues faced by the country. As many as nineteen topics were placed before the participants, from abstract to the topical and the result was a revealing relevance of the topics in the lives of children.

Mr.M.P.John, Rev.Joy Halder, Mrs.Sushma Kaul & Mrs.Rose Lal – all faculty members, took on the onerous responsibility of conducting the debates year after year.

The judges who are invited for the debates came from a wide cross-section of society excelling in their respective fields of interest. Some of the judges have been the Late Mrs. Amrita Malik, Dr. Shobhana Bhattacharya, Mr. Mark Tully, Mr. Kishie Singh, Mrs. Shama Fatehally, Mr.Umesh Anand and Mr. Roopinder Singh.

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THE SILVER JUBILEE EDITION

The Rev Dr. Samuel Slater Memorial Invitational English Debates (named after the first Headmaster) is a debating tournament, inaugurated in 1996, as a platform for young women and men from English medium schools across the country, to interact with each other and form lasting connections, while testing their skill and wins against each other in a friendly atmosphere.

Unlike other inter-school debates of the time, which were single debates which saw one speaker from each school speaking for the motion, while the other spoke against, at Slater, the schools spoke as a team, with three speakers from each school speaking together, either for or against the motion. The first year saw only eleven teams, this rapidly grew to twelve, and with it the tournament evolved into a league for the preliminary debates, followed by Semi-finals and Finals. The first School to win the debates was The Doon School.

During Covid years, which saw most schools take their Inter-school debating onto an online platform, we didn't. This was not due to any distaste of the platform, but for two reasons, the first being one of the primary objectives of the tournament - to allow young people to meet, interact and form lasting friendships, and the second - we just couldn't do the 25 Slater Debates online!

We are holding the Silver Jubilee Edition of the Slater Debates from the 17th October, 2022 with a total of 32 schools participating from all over the country over 4 days.

The time will include seminars and lectures by eminent Old Cottonians and other personalities, visits to the breathtaking interior of Himachal Pradesh, fun evenings with bonfires, music & dance and even a chance for the contestants themselves to showcase their talents in entertainment.

The schools arrive on the 16th of October and the next two days are the pre-quarter final debates. The 19th will see both the quarter finals as well as the semi-finals. The Finals will be held on the 20th, with the teams leaving on the 21st.

Previous Winners of The Rev. Dr. Samuel Slater Memorial Inter-School English Debates have been as under:

1996 - The Doon School, Dehradun

1997 - The Doon School, Dehradun

1998 - Bishop Cotton School, Shimla

1999 - La Martiniere Boys' School, Calcutta

2000 - St. James School, Calcutta

2001 - Mayo College Girls' School, Ajmer

2002 - La Martiniere Boys' School, Kolkata

2003 - The Cathedral & John Connon School, Mumbai

2004 - La Martiniere Girls' School, Kolkata

2005 - Bishop Cotton School, Shimla

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2006 - La Martiniere Girls' School, Kolkata
2007 - The Doon School, Dehradun
2008 - The Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehradun
2009 - Mayo College Girls' School, Ajmer
2010 - La Martiniere Boys' School, Kolkata
2011 - La Martiniere Boys' School, Kolkata
2012 - La Martiniere Boys' School, Kolkata
2013 - Vasant Valley School, Delhi and Bishop Cotton School, Shimla
2014 - Bishop Cotton School, Shimla
2015 - The Doon School, Dehradun
2016 - The Sri Ram School, Gurugram
2017 - La Martiniere Boys' School, Kolkata
2018 - La Martiniere Girls' College, Lucknow
2019 - La Martiniere Girls' College, Lucknow

Bishop Cotton School, Shimla

Bishop Cotton School is an institution rooted in history and tradition. Over decades, its alumni have included some of the most distinguished men in India and elsewhere. From the uniformed services to administrators, from businessmen and industrialists, to authors and actors, Bishop Cotton School has nurtured nascent talents and helped them come to fruition. This is a school that provides a child with a firm foundation to look capably and confidently to a global role in the years to come.

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