


To read, or not to read: students debate the role of media

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A student participant at the debate

CHENNAI: Students from 14 colleges in Chennai, grappled with the question 'Monitoring the Media – should we or not?' at the annual Elihu Yale Inter-collegiate debate on Wednesday. It was organised by Indo-American Association, Chennai, along with Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women, at the college auditorium. A panel of experts from various fields — P Shankar, former Chief secretary of Tamil Nadu, and CVC India, K Saraswathi, secretary general, Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jennifer Arul, broadcast journalist — had gathered to judge the debate.

The speakers' arguments brought up questions about freedom of speech and expression, fundamental rights, and the intent of media. Speaking of the relevance of such competitions, Nischay Vegi from Rajalakshmi Engineering college said, "Speaking in front of a panel like this is rare and humbling because people show a keen interest to listen to us."

The Elihu Yale Inter-Collegiate debate has been organised as a rolling trophy since 1973, for students to discuss issues relating to both India and the world such as demonetisation and security. K Saraswathi, secretary general, The Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry said, "Our aim is to break students out of the standard education framework, and get them debating about things around them."

This year students from Great Lakes Institute of Management, Women's Christian College, Stella Maris, Loyola College, SRM University, and others participated. Sita Murari, co-ordinator at Indo- American Association said, "The champions from the previous year host the next year's event. We've seen good response over these years, and lesser known colleges from Mahabalipuram, Kallikuppam among other areas show a lot of interest."