

VOICES ... Young People Speak Out

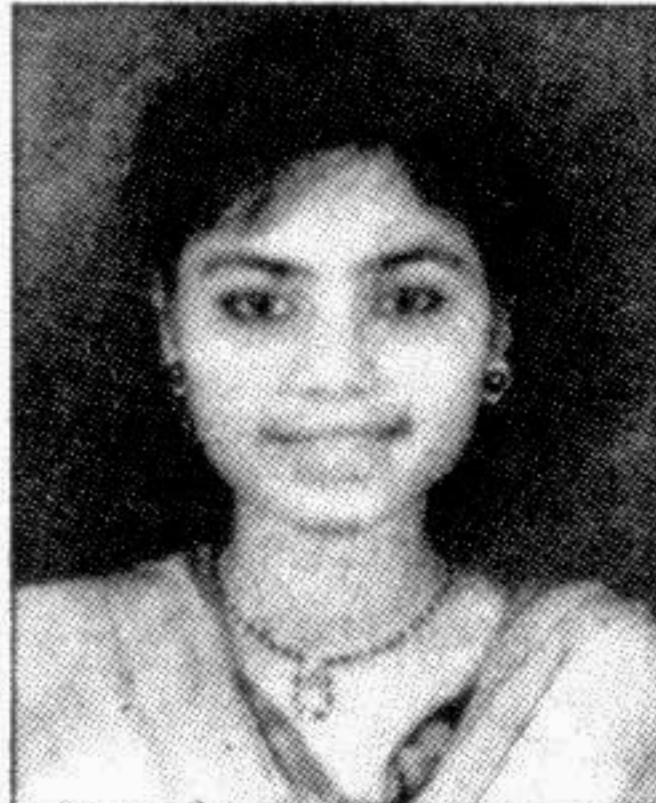
The Fate of the Common People

The political crisis that has been going on in our country for about 19 months has not only affected our people but also the students. They had to suffer a lot for it. To find out what they think about it, the VOICES Team asked them three questions and here is how they replied. We hope it would enable the readers to understand their feelings.

The Three Questions

What is your impression on our national politics?
What sort of people do you think should be our leaders?
If you were a leader today what would have you done to improve our condition?

Shagufta Hasan
 Viquarunnisa Noon College, Dhaka. Translated by Shafquat Rabbee



THE political structure of our country is definitely weak. Although the country is being declared a democratic one, the malpractice of democracy of our political leaders has played havoc over our social, political and economic arena. The political leaders have completely failed to meet up the basic needs of the mass.

In the parliamentary form of democracy, whenever a government is elected by the vote of the people, it has a stipulated time to perform its duties. If it fails to meet up the basic demands of the people during this period, its politics are proved wrong and the country faces absolute disaster. But the other political parties cannot exploit the failure of the government to strengthen their political ground by calling hartals or strikes. It is the duty of the opposition parties to work with the government whenever the country is in trouble.

Ironically, we see a complete to different picture in our political field. Here we find our political leaders fighting for power, not for the betterment of the life and living of the common people. In my point of view, it is the dignified duty of the government as well as every conscious citizen to take effective steps to make a perceptible change in our national politics for the greater interest of our people. We will have to build up a congenial political atmosphere by terminating all kinds of violent programmes like hartals, strikes, etc. which cause severe damage to our economy. If we cannot ensure all these things, our suffering will remain as horrible as ever.

A POLITICAL leader should be a wise, accomplished, intelligent person. He or she should be a real patriot — who should not have the greed for power. A political leader should be devoted to the people's benefit. To him or her, the common people has to be the first priority. I want to see such political leaders who are conscious enough about the fundamental rights of the people, specially of women's. A political leader should be educated and he or she should possess a strong desire to in-

crease the literacy rate of our country.

IF I can become the national leader of our country, I shall put maximum emphasis on our education system. I should try to improve the rural educational structure. In our society, women are lagging behind than men. In different spheres of life they are deprived of proper respect. Like the Medieval Age they are still being tortured. If I can become the national leader of our country, I would ensure proper respect and facilities to our women by giving them education and economic support. I would ensure the fundamental rights to women.

I shall try to build up a strong economic infrastructure by making the country free from the curse of foreign loans. For this, I will emphasise to strengthen our industries as well as our agriculture.

Without having a good political system nothing is possible. So, I shall try to make our political sector free from terrorism. In short, I shall sacrifice my life for the well-being of our people.

Nusrat Khan Majlish
 Holy Cross College



THE political situation in our country has been volatile for a long time. But now, because of the political impasse between the government and the opposition political parties, the situation is left without any solution. The problem started one-and-a-half years ago when the opposition parties started demanding national elections under a non-party neutral government to ensure democratic progress and the right to vote. Since then, the common — the poor — people had to go through 6 to 24-hour strikes, including violent lights and deaths.

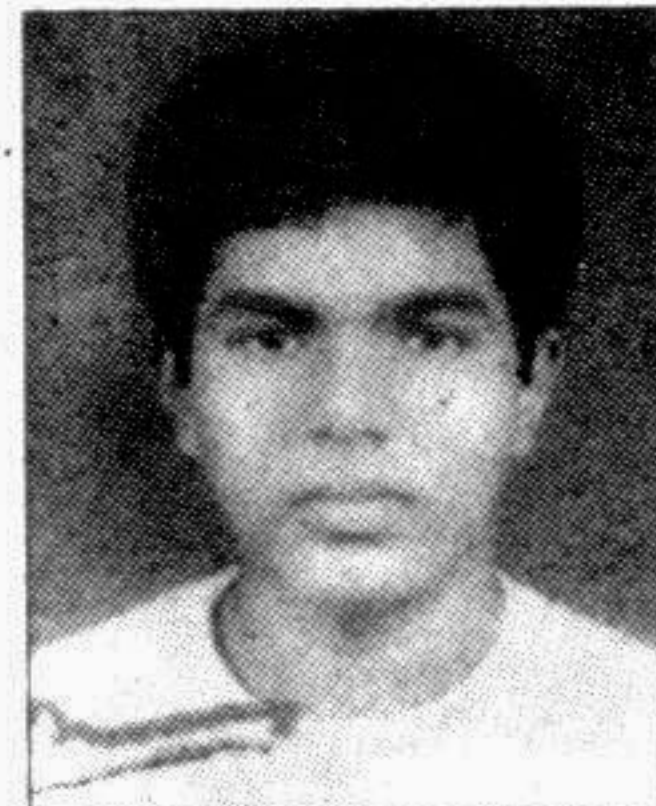
Students like us also had difficulties for attending regular classes and even had to sit for exams on our weekly holidays. Though it is said that "the voice of the people is the voice of God", it doesn't stand in any place in our present-political system. For lack of goodwill, sincerity and understanding between our mainstream political parties, we are to face many social and economic crises. Many of our intellectuals including some foreigners have also tried to create a healthy atmosphere through dialogues between the government and the opposition parties. But they failed because of the uncompromising attitude of the leaders.

A LEADER whom I like is to be a person dedicated to the cause of whole people and not for a particular group

or class. He or she should be honest, benevolent and a thinker. The leader has to have a charisma to mobilise people for achieving goals set for the good of the people.

IF I get a chance to be a political leader someday, I would take steps to eradicate all kinds of corruption from our social system. I would give exemplary punishments to those persons who have ruined the country's economy for their self-interest. My effort would be made to prevent the accumulation of power in the hands of any particular individual or group. I would spend maximum money in education so that everybody receive the basic education. In this way people would be conscious of their rights and obligations so that they are in a position to choose right persons to form the government. I definitely think these efforts will certainly make a vast difference in the political surroundings for the next generation who are yet to come.

Galib Hamid
 Khulna University



A POLITICAL mystery is prevailing in Bangladesh. The party in power is playing hide and seek game with the people by trying to be smart over the electorate. Bypassing the political crisis, the government is trying to impress the people that everything is normal. The Parliament is sitting as usual despite more than 142 members had earlier resigned. With the one-party Parliament, the party in power is still going with the House claiming the majority, as if the people have leased the country to them for five years. But normal parliamentary behaviour should prompt the government to go for mid-term polls immediately after the resignation of the 142 members. Instead, the resignation decision of the members was delayed and no sincere efforts from government side was made to resolve the issue of the opposition.

The government is claiming to have showing respect to people's mandate who have elected it to the power. But, the reality is that people had not given mandate to any single party in the 1991 elections as none of the contesting party got absolute majority. In fact, the BNP needed Jamaat-e-Islami to form Government with whose support it came to power. And in reality the narrow majority the government is now enjoying is because of the non-elected women-member seats which it shared with Jamaat giving 2 of the 30.

On the other hand, the opposition parties with repeated calls of hartal are causing dislocations in the society. Hartal is obviously a political weapon for the opposition in a democratic process. But too much of it sometimes create distaste.

The two ladies are attacking one another with sharp words which again is damaging the very fabric of democracy in the country. The politics of letter-writing without any sincere efforts to resolve the impasse may come to the advantage of the government temporarily, but ultimately it will leave a heavy toll on the party in power. Democracy is for the people, by the people and of the people. But press not political situation gives an idea that democracy is to serve the purpose of the government.

Democracy always requires a leadership specially in the House and in the opposition to play their roles in its process. Speaking outside the Parliament and avoiding to participate in its sessions do not help smooth running of a democratic march. Good democratic behaviour always calls for constant contact, discussion and exchanges of views among the parties in the House and also, to a great

extent, parties outside the Parliament. But in case of Bangladesh, everything of that sort is absent. The leader of the House seems to have an aversion to such parliamentary and democratic norms.

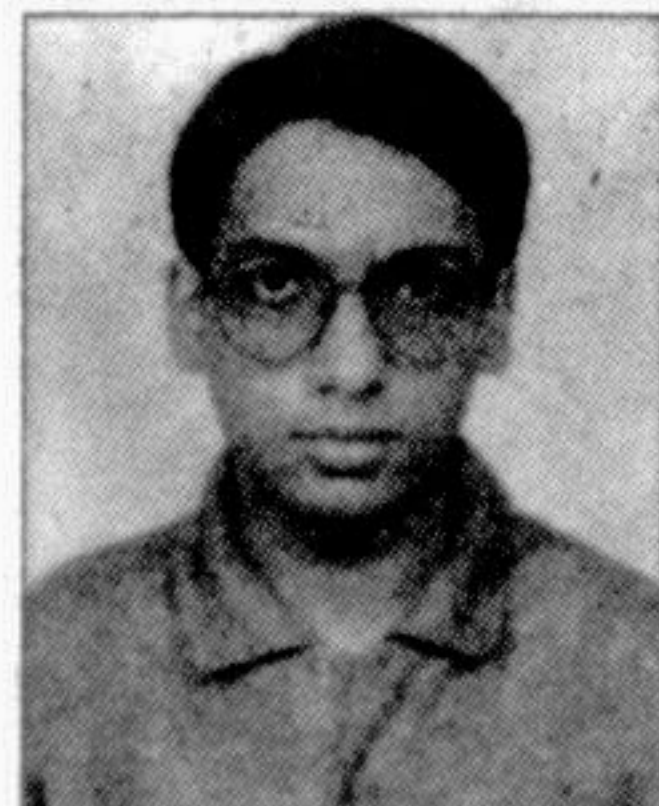
Of late, it is being said that Parliament will be dissolved to pave the way for new general elections. But it will have no impact on keeping political impasse unresolved. Rather, it will give rise to social indiscipline. The demand for neutral caretaker government for next three or four general elections would surely help consolidate democracy. Because, experience says elections in 1970 and 1991 were fair and free because the government at those times were not party in the elections. Constitution is not a Koran. It can always be amended for the betterment of the people. So far, we have 12 amendments in the Constitution. Most of the earlier amendments do not merit to be incorporated in the Constitution, but it were done to serve the purpose of individual or coterie.

If such is the constitutional history of Bangladesh, then the neutral caretaker government provision which surely will give democracy a firm footing and ensure the electorate to their right of franchise without fear, cannot be incorporated in the Constitution. Furthermore, if anyone logically or illogically have so much love for the Constitution, then why the appointment of OMBUDSMAN was not made as yet?

IF I am the leader by chance, then first I would go for amending the Constitution in consultation with the opposition members for incorporating the provision of neutral caretaker government for holding next four or five general elections. Under the present situation, I would have agreed to a neutral caretaker government with the Chief Justice as its head.

As a leader, I would make all probe reports on political killings in the country public because I feel not publishing of the reports is to deny the people's sovereignty and create scope for place intrigues. I would also repeal all black laws including the Special Powers Act. All these I would do to transparent in real sense and not on paper only as it is now. My efforts would be guided to return the sovereign power of the people to them which most of the times were robbed by politicians and, for their failure, by others.

Faheem Hussain
 Class XII
 Notre Dame College

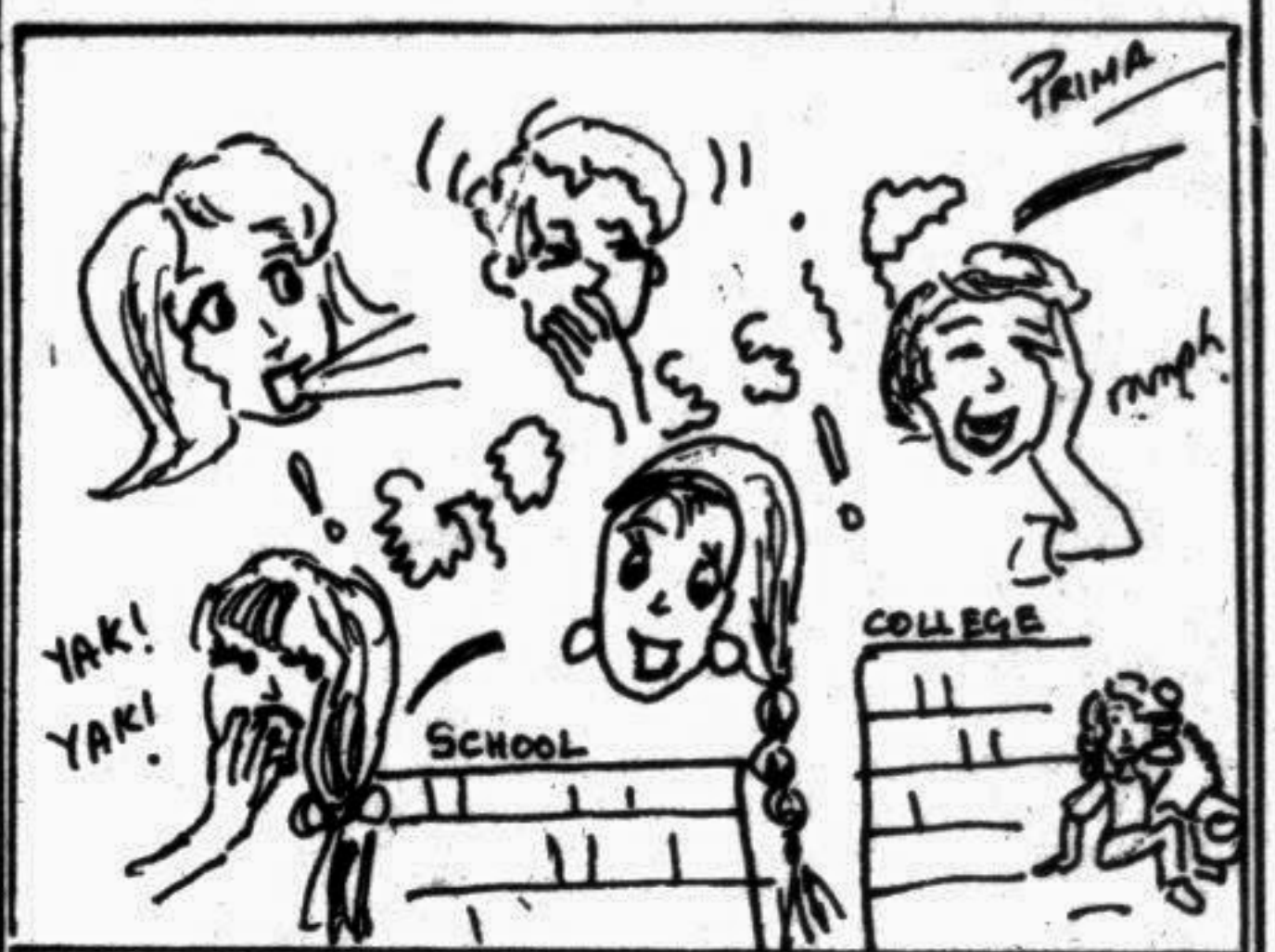


MY impression on our present political crisis is very adverse. It is an impediment to our march towards democracy. It will go to our history as a dark episode. The present situation arose as a result of the undemocratically-elected leaders, and the party in power and opposition are both equally responsible for such a situation. Their failure to find out a solution to the lingering political problem through discussion is a reflection of obstinacy and mediocrity of our political leadership.

There is no mutual respect or trust between the party in power and the opposition. But this is the life-blood in a parliamentary system of democracy. It is ironic to see that the party which contributed most to bring back parliamentary system has now joined hands with the autocrats and fundamentalists which is running the system. We pray to God Almighty to free us from the curse of these imprudent leaders.

ACCORDING to my opinion there is none among the pre-

COLLEGE CORRIDOR



Colour-fight at Dhaka College

November 9, 1995, students were seen out on the streets of Dhaka College in various colours. What's the reason? It was their 'Rag Day'. There was a Physics exam on that day, so most of the students were present. That's why they decided to stage their Rag Day, though it wasn't the last class. They were all loaded with tonnes of coloured waters in bottles and siringes, chasing each other, colouring their faces and soaking themselves with blue, yellow, red, pink colours. Pity for them, who went through that road that day, because they were also victim of this colour-fight.



Higher Secondary Rumours

The HSC result of Dhaka Board was out on October 24. As usual, there were a lot of rumours went out about it. There are always some people who suspect that there must be some link between the merit-list holder and the board authority. Unfortunately, the students who were expected to secure the top positions, were not able to reach even the 20th position.

sent political practitioners who can head the government to lead the country to stability and prosperity. The present leaders have hardly any quality of their own. They have become leaders mostly by chance. They are adamant in upholding the traditions, good or bad, of their father or husband. They bother least to re-orient their policy with the changing circumstances and to take into account the world-view.

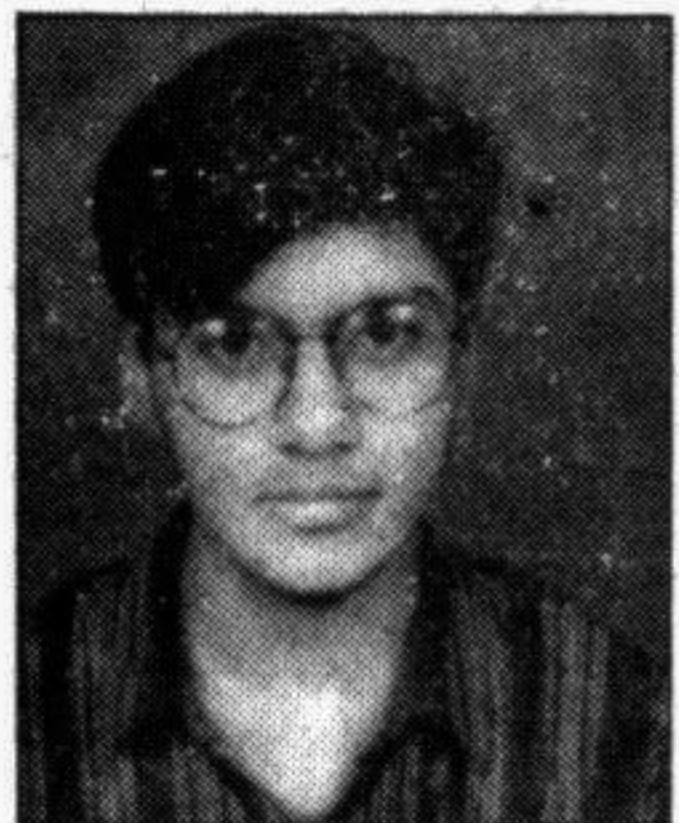
Besides, there are professional student leaders (they are professional, because they hardly have any relation with academics or academic calendar) with fiery eloquence and almost with no moral serapes. None of them can be entrusted with the solemn responsibility of building up the nation. Now we need a person of iron will who is educated, honest, corruption-free, and above all, a patriot.

Outside our country, we see such leaders namely Nelson Mandela, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Mahathir Muhammad and others. People of this quality are not rare in our country but they are not associated with politics. Our duty is to bring them to the fore-front of politics and free the country from the domain of mediocre, half-educated and irresponsible politicians.

IF I am blessed with the power of leading the nation as president or prime minister, I shall introduce a new type of democracy to be known as 'Democratic Absolutism'. Before election, I shall place my plans and programmes to the people. If they support it I would be very strict to the implementation of those. I shall unite the whole nation under the slogan of nationalism and development. There would be uniform education system with emphasis on technical education throughout the country and every citizen would get equal opportunity. Career would be open to merit-wise and not to any connection.

Initially meritorious students would be sent abroad for higher education and training with the compulsion to come back to the country. Subsequently, we may have exchange programmes with the developed countries to make up our deficiencies. My economic policy would be a mixed one. At first, I shall have to look after the vital interests of our growing industries. Once these are stabilised, they would be freed to open competition. "Nurse the baby, protect the child

Shafquat Rabbee
 Dhaka College, Dhaka



Our national politics hardly attracts me. Sometimes our political atmosphere seems quite horrible and disgusting. I condemn our people, not the political leaders, for this miserable situation. We, being too much unconscious about our socio-economic condition, are letting the political leaders to play with the fate of the common people. If we were aware enough, we could refrain our leaders from doing so.

A political leader should be educated honest and committed to the common people. He or she should possess patriotism and be devoted to the country. Above all he or she should have patience and respect to other people's opinion and feelings.

IF I can become the national leader of my country, first of all, I would take an extensive step to recollect the bank loan from the bank defaulters. Secondly, I should abolish student politics and make the educational institutions politics-free. I shall also uproot fundamentalism and fundamentalist politics. Having got the power, I would ensure punishment of the 1971 war criminals. Besides these, I would try to abolish all corruptions from the land.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Why Voices?

WE are always telling our young people what to do, and what NOT to do. But seldom do we allow them to tell us, the ADULTS, what are their thoughts about the way we are running things which affect them so much. Education system, curricula, quality of books, qualification of teachers, poor transportation system, rising cost of education, disruption of sessions due to political agitation, terrorism in colleges, student politics, etc. all affect the lives of our college students, and yet they do not have a place where they can speak out on these issues.

So we decided to create VOICES. This will be a page dedicated to the young people. In its columns we invite all college students to write about their views all issues that concern them, including on the political, social and economic. We also invite them to write about their college life, sports and cultural activities that they are involved in, the various occasions that they observe and especially about their extra-curricular activities.

It is our hope that through VOICES we will learn to understand our younger generation better, and establish a dialogue with them. We also intend to have a lot of fun working together.

Night Writer

Dear Fahima, Hello sweetie! How are you doing? Hope everything is going just fine and you are enjoying your time in the city of romance, Paris or Pakhi (as your French friends say). I got your e-mail a few weeks ago and had gone through it a million times. You know how much time I need before answering your mails, because I have to think for 2 days what words should be most appropriate to express my true feelings. And then I have to take another day for looking at your cute pictures. But I confess, it actually took me a whole week to write back to you, because I was busy with something else. Wait, please don't get me wrong, don't switch off the computer, it wasn't any other girl. So you needn't worry about that, I was busy with some damn newspaper job. OK, let me explain it to you.

Remember the time while eating out in Big Bite, you told me about an American kid who was the editor of a teenage magazine. All the journalists of that magazine were also teenagers. You also said that it's a shame that we don't have such opportunities in our country, there aren't any magazine that's being run by teenagers. Well guess what? Now the chance has come and do you know who's gonna take responsibility, it's me, Aron, your one and only.

You might be wondering how I got this job. While arranging a programme, I met Mr Mahfuz Anam, the editor of The Daily Star and he told me about his plan to publish a page which would be edited and written by the college students like us. What a coincidence! I was thinking about the same thing. I told him that I had the same intention to do something worth while. That's how it started really. He told me to make up a team and start work for this page. Oh! if you were here you could be in the team with me. But no, you had to move with your father in Paris. Just my luck!

We had done some meetings with the editor to decide the strategy of our page. The name of this page will be 'Voice'. It's gonna be a dialogue for the teenage youth, what we're concerned about right now, what we are thinking about recent happenings or changes, what's our opinion, our problems and everything about us: it's gonna be like speaking out in this page, saying whatever we feel might be important. There also will be brief news from our colleges, what's going on

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