

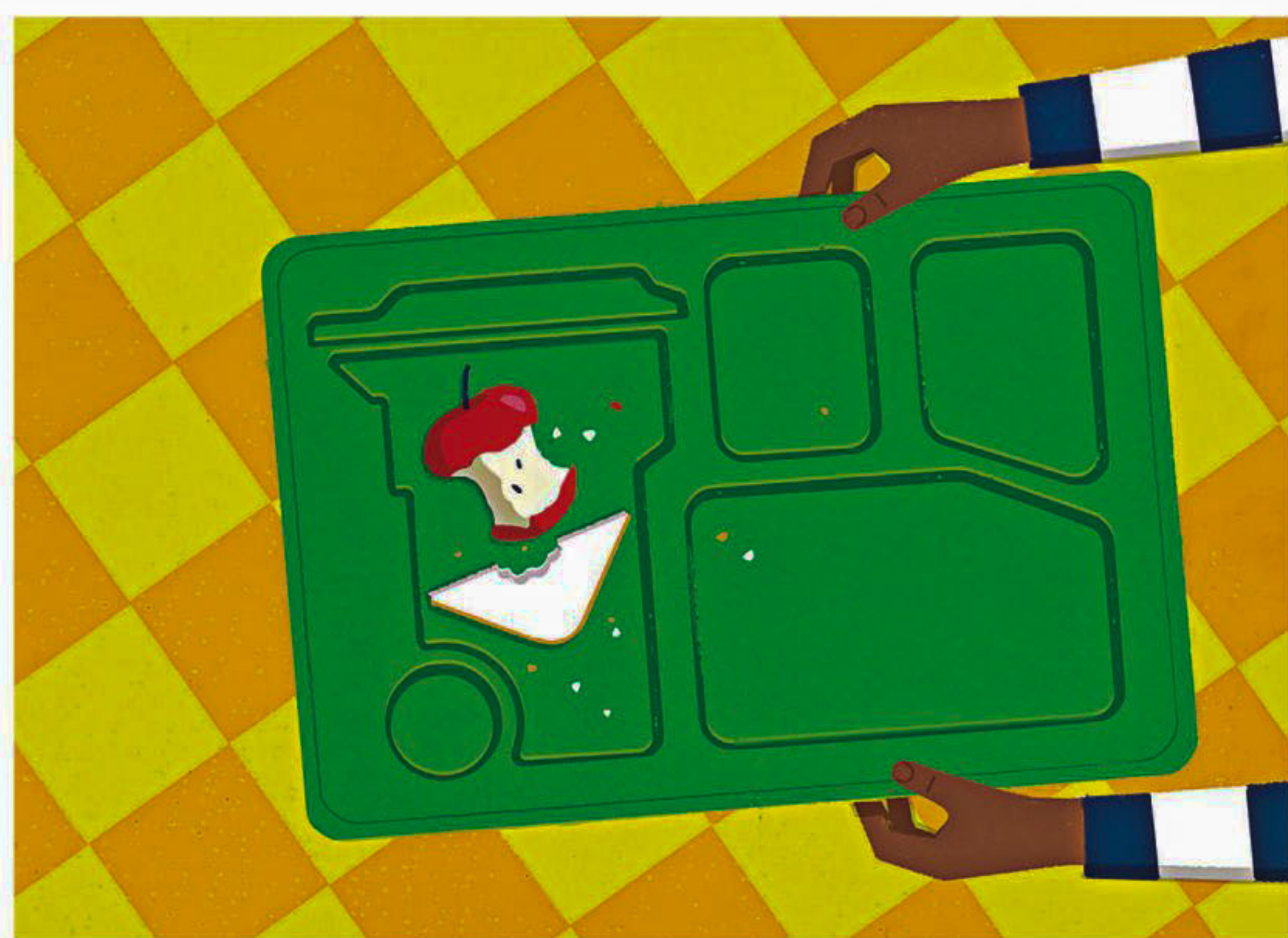
SCHOOLS WASTE & RESPONSIBILITY

FARIHA S. KHAN

With Italy taking a step towards spearheading the fight against climate change by making 33 hours of environmental lessons mandatory in schools, it's important to dwell over the role that schools play when it comes to stopping the epidemic. In line with the Italians, all schools should start to integrate environmental studies into their core curriculum to ensure that their students are well informed about the climate crisis. Alongside, schools in Bangladesh should also begin to implement rules and personal goals in order to ensure they play an active role in building a greener country. Listed below are a few ways to do so.

MAKE TREE PLANTATION NECESSARY
A Filipino law proposed earlier this year makes it necessary for students to plant at least 10 trees in order to graduate. While formalising a tradition of planting trees, the law also aims to combat climate change simultaneously. If a similar rule is implemented in Bangladeshi schools, it could lead to at least a few million trees being planted, allowing students to build a better environment for the future. Although planting trees cannot fix the damage already done to the environment, it can still go a long way.

ENCOURAGE COMPOSTING
Much of the food waste that schools



produce contribute to greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon dioxide and produce harmful liquids. Instead of sending this waste to landfill, composting the organic material can be very beneficial for the environment and play a significant role during gardening. Apart from food scraps, much of the paper products that schools tend to waste can also be used to compost.

Informative articles and videos can be found all over the internet to ease you into composting, making it very convenient for students to start their own composting initiatives.
BOOKS, COPIES AND OTHER MATERIALS
It is understood that a big part of helping the environment is to recycle, but a bigger

advantage to recycling books is that other people are saved from the financial trouble of having to buy books for the new academic year. Very often, the new materials we buy have hundreds of unused pages left so it would be very wise to reuse those instead of buying new copies. It's going to be a long time before schools in Bangladesh become ready to be paper-free, so until then, the best we can do is to reduce the usage of paper as much as we can. Ban single use plastic. And yes, that goes for school events too.

ENCOURAGE SCHOOL BUSES
Transportation is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, so start encouraging the teachers, support staff and your peers to start walking to school. Ask your school to provide transportation services so that large numbers of students are able to travel on buses to and from school, reducing much of their carbon footprint.

Lastly, try encouraging your school to set up an environment club that can oversee the activities of the school as a whole and take necessary action when rules regarding the environment are violated. With very little time to save the environment, we must do as much as we can as fast as we can.

Fariha enjoys binge-watching movies in the dark vicinity of her bedroom. Strike up a conversation with her at fariha.safa@gmail.com

WAIT, HOW OLD AM I AGAIN?

FAIZA ADIL

Among the hundreds of decisions taken by our parents before we had the maturity to really gasp and say stop, birth certificate tampering is one that really puts people on the spot sometimes. Be it in your teens or your late fifties, hesitating when asked about your age elicits frowns, questioning glances and in most unfortunate circumstances – suspicion in important legal proceedings.

Obviously, being among the oldest in your classes throughout school is awkward, having to elaborate on why you're 18 – or even 19 – and STILL in school with dozens of 17 year olds gets embarrassing, tiring and is really just a general nuisance. But that's what would be classed as a minor inconvenience in relation to the many other problems that arise as you age and handle legal forms, academic applications and a boatload of other things.

"So far I've received none of the benefits my parents thought I'd get for appearing a year younger," said Anika Aslam[], a college student. With most people with tampered birth dates claiming to have not yet received any of the potential "perks", it's important to really understand why this was even possible and thought of as a good idea.

Most commonly, for younger people that have to live with this problem, it all started when they got into school. Birth certificates weren't yet made at the time of birth in a lot of smaller local hospitals, and with seemingly no need for it in their earlier years, they were simply never brought up. That is, until school admissions. This was when most of these children had their birth certificates required and made.

Besides just that, many older people find the need to use their own birth certificates a lot later in their lives, a point in which a birth certificate was made for the very first time with a year that suited them. With years altered to be multiple years off. For most, a tampered birth date means they can work longer and retire later, be eligible for certain things or be allowed to opt out of other things – all of which may build a good reasoning behind it, but in the end also increase risk of complications in the future that most don't account for. Take for example a woman with a legal age below retirement who faces health complications later in life but with a tampered birth date that isn't yet approved for retirement.

Medical complications are also another major issue that may arise from birth date tampering. With many serious health concerns, age plays a big role in diagnosis of the patient and with them having tampered birth dates, misdiagnosis could be a dangerous possibility. And even if the medical practitioner is dutifully informed of the age alteration, when these people have considerable health conditions requiring foreign treatment, passport dates could potentially begin to conflict with medical reports.

Apart from the more serious issues, children growing up with altered birth dates



live with the constant need to be wary of the consequences of messing up their birth dates to the wrong person. The perpetual fear of getting into trouble with something as simple as their birth date, children face social situations with angst and an unnecessary need to lie about their age in casual conversations. For a nine year old, having to explain why they just turned nine instead of eight puts them in a spot where they've been taught to say the legal truth.

Having friends younger than them, some of these children tend to grow more and more wary of their flaws as they go into their teens, with having to cope with what to them feels like a distinct confirmation of their shortcomings each time they are made aware of their age. "I feel stupid for being in a grade with everyone younger than me and still doing average," said Ramisa Alam[], a student appearing for her first board examinations. Stemming from the deep-rooted belief that

the older they are the wiser, these children see their younger peers' successes as evidence of them being older yet, still just average in comparison.

On top of growing up with these insecurities, a majority of teens with tampered birth dates will and do inevitably graduate later than the average student, leading them to not only feel but also – in numerous ways – be "behind" in their lives, in terms of where they are supposed to be at their actual age. This adds to the frustration of feeling "below average", and creates an unnecessary pressure on students that end up going to college in their twenties instead of the more traditional age of 18.

From driving licences to complications with national identification cards, whether they're in their teens or mid-fifties, birth certificate tampering causes a myriad of problems at different stages of their lives. Consoled by the sole excuse that this was done "for their own good", it starts to lose its value as repeated obstacles

surface because of it. Especially considering that this is a choice, which they never got the chance to agree to, and now simply have to live with.

And while if you're one of them, there's no concrete way to resolve a tampered birth certificate, your age does not undervalue the progress you make academically. No matter how much older you are in school, it's important to remember that you're learning the same things and age does not factor into your academic capabilities. Stressing over something that you cannot possibly change only serves to deter you further. And if it's any consolation, tampering with birth certificates occurs significantly less now.

**Names have been changed for privacy*

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BYLC Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center
YOUTH CARNIVAL 2019

DATE
December 27 & 28 2019

REGISTRATION

bylc.org/carnival2019

VENUE
Government College of Physical Education Mohammadpur, Dhaka

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