

Man held over savings certificate fraud

4 accused include former JCD leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested a man yesterday in connection with the embezzlement of Tk 25 lakh by manipulating the National Savings Certificate system, exposing forgery and unauthorised encashment.

The arrestee, Arifur Rahman, 32, is among four accused in a case filed by Abul Khair Md Khalid, additional director of Bangladesh Bank, with Motiheel Police Station on Wednesday.

The other accused still on the run are Maruf Elahi, 36, Al Amin, 23, and Mohiuddin Ahmed, 46, said the police station's Officer-in-Charge Mezbah Uddin.

Maruf is a former leader of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal. A leader of the organisation's central committee, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Maruf was a vice-president in the previous committee but holds no position in the current one.

According to the case statement,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Workers carry freshly cut wild sugarcane flowers (kaash phul) on a van on the Bypass Road in Khulna city yesterday. The flowers are collected from different areas, sorted, and sold to betel farmers for around Tk 10 a bundle. The farmers use the stems to tie and support betel vines.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Govt clears path

FROM PAGE 1

transplantation. It permitted organ donations from the living and the brain dead but with strict limitations, primarily allowing donations from immediate family members, parents, siblings, and children.

This narrow donor pool often left patients with limited options for organ transplants. To address this, the law was amended in 2018, expanding the definition of “close relatives” to include grandparents, grandchildren, and first cousins.

However, more changes were required as people who needed organ transplantations still struggled to find donors outside the family pool.

NHRC ORDINANCE

Yesterday, the council also gave final approval to the National Human Rights Commission Ordinance, 2025, empowering the NHRC to investigate and take firm action against any human rights violations, including those committed by law enforcement agencies, state-sponsored entities, or individuals.

Nazrul said the ordinance authorises the commission to take the lead in implementing laws related to human rights protection, including the proposed Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Remedies Ordinance and the Protection of Victims of Enforced Disappearance Ordinance.

“The earlier plan to form a separate commission on enforced disappearances has been dropped,” the law adviser said. “The Human Rights Commission itself will handle those responsibilities.”

Compliance with the commission's orders has been made mandatory under the proposed ordinance, he added.

“In the past, we had a toothless Human Rights Commission. It lacked real authority, and even those appointed to it either could not or did not exercise its legal powers,” he said.

“We have taken this initiative to make the Human Rights Commission a stronger institution,” he added.

He also noted that the commission will have the authority to ensure the protection of not only the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution, but also the rights recognised in international treaties ratified by the country.

According to the ordinance, the commission will consist of a chairperson and four members. A seven-member selection committee, led by a judge of the Appellate Division, will recommend their appointments.

The committee will issue a public notice seeking applications and may also consider prominent individuals who have been active in human rights work.

Before finalising the appointments, it will conduct interviews with the shortlisted candidates.

JULY UPRISING MUSEUM

The Advisory Council also approved the July Uprising Memorial Museum Ordinance, declaring Gono Bhavan a museum.

Nazrul said it would function as an independent institution, separate from other museum authorities, to preserve the uprising's historical and emotional significance.

“As per the ordinance, the ‘Aynaghar’ sites will also be expanded as branch museums under the July Uprising Memorial Museum,” the law adviser said.

The council also discussed the treatment of those injured during the July uprising and the burial of unidentified victims at Rayerbazar.

At the press briefing, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said that so far, 65 injured individuals have been sent abroad for treatment. He added that efforts are underway to identify the unnamed martyrs buried at Rayerbazar.

‘A mockery of the people’

FROM PAGE 1

and the points are listed accordingly.

“Now, our question is: shouldn't these be included in the commission's recommendations for implementing the July charter? But they have removed all the opinions and prepared their own proposals,” he said.

Fakhrul added that at the October 17 signing ceremony, parties endorsed the section pledging to uphold the charter formulated through dialogue. However, the BNP had not received the final copy that day.

After obtaining the printed July National Charter 2025, the party noticed that several clauses agreed upon through consensus had been revised without its knowledge, he said.

For instance, he noted, the proposal to remove the constitutional requirement to display the portrait of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in government and private offices was omitted from the final text despite having near unanimous support.

Similarly, while most parties supported a proposal to repeal article 150 (2) of the constitution, which covers Sheikh Mujib's historic March 7 speech and other documents, the final charter “quietly changed” the proposal, he added.

IMPLEMENTATION ORDER

The commission's final recommendations offered two alternative methods for implementing and legally backing the constitutional reforms in the July charter.

First, it urged the interim government to issue an order titled “July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order”.

“The government does not have the authority to issue such an order. According to the definition in article 152 of the constitution, an ‘order’ carries the force of law and therefore falls under the jurisdiction of the president,” Fakhrul said.

The second option proposes that the government prepare a comprehensive draft bill covering 48 constitutional reform provisions and place it in a referendum to implement the charter.

Fakhrul said neither option acknowledges the dissenting opinions and notes submitted by political parties that were included in the signed charter.

“In effect, the proposals and recommendations of the consensus commission are being imposed unilaterally and coercively upon the nation. This suggests that the year-long discussions between political parties, the reform commissions, and the consensus commission were ultimately meaningless; an exercise in futility, deception, and a betrayal of the nation,” he said.

Rift among parties poses challenge

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, a source present at the meeting told The Daily Star that some advisers supported holding the referendum on the same day as the national polls. However, no decision was taken.

Nazrul said that earlier there was conflict over the content of the charter. “Now, two more conflicts have arisen – one on the method of implementation, and the other over whether the referendum will take place and when.”

He added that the consensus commission has proposed two options: one is to implement the July charter first and then hold the referendum; if not done within 270 days, the constitutional amendments would take effect automatically. The other is to leave the matter to the elected parliament.

He added that differing views are natural in a democracy, which is why dialogue was held in the first place, yet the commission has “disregarded the democratic right of political parties to express dissent”.

REFORM COUNCIL

The implementation order states that alongside forming the next parliament through the upcoming general election, a constitutional reform council will be constituted, with members taking separate oaths as MPs and as council members.

Should the referendum pass, the proposed council would then treat the constitutional reform bill as a guiding document for its work.

Fakhrul questioned the legality of such a move, noting that the Election Commission is constitutionally mandated to conduct elections to parliament and the presidency, not to form a reform council.

He said the matter was neither placed on the dialogue agenda nor opened for discussion with the consensus commission, leaving no scope for agreement on it.

The formation of any such body, he stressed, must be decided by the next parliament. “Yet, taking such pre-emptive steps before the national election and referendum is entirely unacceptable,” Fakhrul said.

He also pointed to a proposal stating that if the council fails to complete reforms within 270 days of its first sitting, the reform bill, once approved by referendum, would be automatically inserted into the constitution.

Calling the idea “wholly irrational, politically motivated, and absurd”, he said no bill can become law without parliamentary passage and presidential assent.

“There is no constitutional provision for automatic incorporation,” he added. “Such a move would violate democratic norms and parliamentary sovereignty.”

‘UP TO GOVT’

When approached for comment on the BNP's criticism and allegations that key issues were dropped in the proposed implementation order without discussion, consensus commission Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz said, “We are aware of it, we'll discuss and review it.”

The extended tenure of the commission, headed by the chief adviser, is scheduled to end today.

Asked why the notes of dissent were not included in the proposed bill's schedule or the implementation order, Ali Riaz replied, “The explanation is quite simple. Submitting a note of dissent means acknowledging that there is disagreement. If the government approves it, then it's okay;

if not, there's nothing more to be done.”

“The government still has the option to consider everything. It can decide as it sees fit. After all, any commission's report is advisory in nature. Now it's up to the government to make a decision.”

REFERENDUM

Fakhrul noted that Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has already announced the national election will take place in the first half of February 2026. In that context, he said, holding the proposed referendum beforehand, as demanded by some other parties, is simply not feasible.

“Given the limited time, the substantial costs, the deployment of law enforcement and manpower, and the scale of organising a national parliamentary election, conducting a separate referendum would be unnecessary, impractical, and ill-considered,” he said.

It would be more appropriate and efficient to hold the referendum on the same day as the national election, using the same logistical arrangements and budget, he argued.

‘NO RUSH’

BNP leaders said no decision to navigate the present political juncture should be rushed or taken in haste, warning that disorderly moves could further weaken the party's position and credibility.

They emphasised that a resolution is still possible if the party's concerns are conveyed directly to Yunus through structured dialogue and detailed discussions.

They described the situation as deeply uncomfortable; an unforeseen turn at a moment when the party was focused on election preparations and fine-tuning its electoral strategy.

During Standing Committee meetings chaired virtually from London by Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman, members squarely blamed the chief adviser and the consensus commission for the unfolding impasse, accusing them of mishandling the political process in the lead-up to the polls.

The BNP had extended cooperation to the interim government on key issues, placing trust in the chief adviser to steward an inclusive reform process, said a senior committee member present at Wednesday's meeting.

“Earlier, we trusted the chief adviser and Prof Ali Riaz. But now, that trust has been broken. It was not right to break promises with a major political party,” the leader said. “We were told that political parties would discuss and reach consensus on these matters, and that the charter would reflect that. So why were the notes of dissent ignored?”

BNP, Jamaat’s pointless debate

FROM PAGE 1

“The ball is now in Dr Yunus's court. Since he is considered an international-level player, it is often said that foreign players tend to slip when playing in Bangladesh because the field is slippery here. But in this slippery field, our law adviser adds even more oil. He only wants politicians to slip,” he added.

At another event organised by NCP's youth wing, Jatiyo Juboshokti, Patwary said: “We still have not found a solution to the recommendations of the July charter – we have not found a solution to the proposals, nor have we found a solution regarding the order.”

Jamaat has brought up the issue of the referendum again.

“If you are asking for the referendum or the date to be set before the election, is it to gain more seats, or is there another reason?”

If the referendum happens and the answer is ‘yes’, it will be a victory for the people of Bangladesh and not for Jamaat-e-Islami, he said.

“Therefore, we call on Jamaat-e-Islami to stop the pretence,” he said.

The NCP wants the referendum, but is not adamant on having it held in November. It insists Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus gives the July charter legal basis.

When the nation is in crisis, Jamaat and the BNP are taking the country into uncertainty together over proportional representation in the lower house and the notes of dissent in the July charter, he said.

“We call on Jamaat not to create public panic over the referendum. Instead, we should focus on how we can reach a solution regarding the notes of dissent and how orders can be issued.”

The BNP no longer has the option to say “no” to the implementation of the July charter, he said.

“They have agreed to the marriage and signed the marriage contract. Now they have no opportunity to say ‘no’. They should have thought about this earlier.”

Issue order to implement

FROM PAGE 1

national election should be held. “We think February is the best time to hold the election.”

He also said the referendum must be held before the national election. “Because if the national election and referendum are held on the same day, voters will be too busy with the

Minimum score required to take MBBS, dental admission lowered

Candidates to get 15 extra minutes to finish

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The minimum combined GPA required for this year's joint MBBS and dental admission test for the 2025-26 academic session has been reduced by 0.5 points, said the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC).

The test will be held on December 12, using the same question paper across Bangladesh. Candidates will get 15 extra minutes to complete the exam, which will run for 1 hour and 15 minutes, up from 1 hour last year.

Under the new guideline, candidates must have a combined GPA of 8.5 in SSC and HSC exams, with at least 4.0 in each, and a minimum of 3.5 in Zoology. The requirement for foreign students has also been lowered to GPA 8.5, while it remains unchanged at 8.0 for candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The admission test will carry 100 marks, with a pass mark of 40, as before. However, it will now include new components assessing candidates' tendencies and human qualities.

Previously, the marks were distributed as 30 for Zoology, 25 for Chemistry, 20 for Physics, 15 for English, and 10 for General Knowledge. Under the new guideline, the marks have been redistributed to 30 for Zoology, 25 for Chemistry, 15 for Physics,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Patwary also accused the BNP of attempting to bring back the Awami League through the National Consensus Commission.

“The people have blocked that attempt. Now, a new phase has emerged with the Jatiya Party. The people will not spare the Jatiya Party either.”

The BNP's “notes of dissent” through the National Consensus Commission are actually “notes of cheating,” he said.

The BNP has given a note of dissent over the Public Service Commission, as they have to provide jobs to the supporters of their party.

“They wanted to deceive the 180 million people of the country. The country's unemployed youth needs jobs, and that is why the people's revolution occurred.”

A neutral PSC is the demand of the student community, he said.

If the government fails to hold the national elections by February and the country moves towards a civil war, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus must take responsibility, Patwary said.

He went to urge the government to “relieve Bangladesh from the uncertainty the BNP is trying to create”.

“We want to move quickly into the election phase...”

He said, “If the government publishes the bill and the orders, the people will review and judge it, and then we will sign it. We don't want to sign anything while the people are kept in the dark.”

Samanta Sharmin, senior joint convener of the NCP, said fair elections will not be possible in Bangladesh until the EC is reformed.

Tasnim Jara, NCP senior joint member secretary, said while there has been a lot of talk about the implementation of the July charter, there is no concrete roadmap for its implementation. “Politics will not continue as it was before – the country has changed,” she said.

national election and forget about the referendum.

“We strongly urge the interim government to act without delay – issue the implementation order, declare the referendum date, and begin preparations for the February election.”

and a comedian – were detained “for making false and misleading criticism on social media” of other artists who produced a pro-election film.

The movie, aired on repeat on state TV, contains scenes with a village doctor urging opposition fighters to lay down their weapons and endorse the election – due to start in phases on December 28.

The newspaper said the three arrested men “failed to contribute their artistic expertise towards the success of the upcoming election”.

“Instead, they criticised and attacked other artists who were cooperating in the process,” it added.

Legislation introduced in July forbids “any speech, organising, inciting, protesting or distributing leaflets in order to destroy a part of the electoral process”.