



Rickshaws clog the Dhanmondi Road-1 in the capital yesterday. The number of illegal rickshaws increases as many rickshaw pullers come to the city to earn more ahead of Eid.

PHOTO:
AMRAN HOSSAIN

Egypt's Sinai rocked by wave of deadly attacks

BBC ONLINE

A wave of attacks by Islamic State (IS) militants in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula has left at least 50 people dead, security and medical sources say.

Near-simultaneous raids were launched on at least five military checkpoints and a police station in and around Sheikh Zuweid yesterday morning.

Clashes were continuing in the area hours later, with militants reportedly roaming the northern town's streets.

It is one of the largest coordinated assaults yet by militants in the Sinai.

Jihadists based in the restive region stepped up their attacks after the military overthrew Islamist President Mohammed Morsi in July 2013. At least 600 police and armed forces personnel have since been killed.

In a separate development yesterday, security officials said nine members of Mr Morsi's now banned Muslim Brotherhood, including former MP Nasr al-Hafi, had been killed in a police raid on a flat in western Cairo.

The security situation in Egypt has worsened since the assassination of the public prosecutor, Hisham Barakat, two days ago in the capital.

TROOPS CAPTURED

Military spokesman Brig-Gen Mohammed Samir said more than 70 "terrorists" fired mortar rounds and detonated a car bomb in attacks on five checkpoints in the Sheikh Zuweid area

of North Sinai province yesterday morning.

Ten soldiers were killed or wounded along with 39 assailants, he added.

Security and army officials told the Associated Press that at least 50 troops had been killed and 55 wounded, and that several had also been taken captive.

Sources meanwhile told the Reuters news agency that at least 36 soldiers, policemen and civilians had been killed along with 38 militants.

Islamic State's local affiliate, Sinai Province, later said in a statement posted online that it had targeted 15 security sites and carried out three suicide attacks.

In the afternoon, Gen Samir said the air force was "targeting terrorists on the ground as clashes continue".

Officials told AP that dozens of policemen were inside Sheikh Zuweid's main police station, which they said was coming under mortar and RPG fire.

"We are not allowed to leave our homes. Clashes are ongoing. A short while ago I saw five [Toyota] Landcruisers with masked gunmen waving black flags," Sheikh Zuweid resident Suleiman al-Sayed told Reuters.

The militants were also reported to have planted bombs along a road between Sheikh Zuweid and a nearby army camp to prevent reinforcements arriving.

Licence to kill

FROM PAGE 1

An AL presidium member and a lawmaker, Sahara can't remember on what grounds Rony was given the licence.

"I can't say about it without going through the file," the former home boss told The Daily Star last week.

When Rony applied for the licence, his mother was acting general secretary of Awami League's women chapter, the Mahila League.

He owned no business back then but had investment in the stock market. The amount invested could not be known but one of his friends said, "He made some money there and bought a new car."

Pinu Khan was elected lawmaker from one of the reserved seats for women in 2011.

In her wealth statement, submitted to the Election Commission prior to becoming parliament member, Pinu Khan said her son had no asset. Her 2014 wealth statement read the same.

An influential lawmaker in the capital recommended issuing the licence, according to Rony's family friends who would not name that MP.

"His rowdiness knew no limit after his mother had become a lawmaker in 2011," said a close friend, adding that Rony used to go to dif-

ferent residential hotels and bars almost every night, used his new identity as the son of a lawmaker and caused nuisance.

He was getting ferocious quite often, brandishing gun to get things in his favours. "We told him many times not to do so, but nothing could stop him," said the friend, who wished not to be named.

Then there was excessive boozing that made him crazy at times. He also maintained multiple girlfriends, and family members suffered a lot for his life style.

In the early hours of April 14, caught in traffic congestion in the city's Eskaton, Rony indiscriminately fired shots from the car. A rickshawpuller and an auto-rickshaw driver lost their life for nothing.

It was his lawmaker mother's tax-free sport utility vehicle (SUV), which Rony regularly used, especially at night.

At the time of the shooting, he was returning from boozing -- first at Golden Dragon at Eskaton and then Sonargaon Hotel.

His daughter was seriously ill and admitted to ICU of Apollo Hospitals. Still he went out with his friends to take alcohol, according to some of his friends.

She died at the hospital on April

15.

The Daily Star could not reach Pinu Khan over the last two days. Contacted last week over the phone, she said she was feeling sick and wouldn't talk.

Rony was involved with Chhatra League in the 90s and contested for general secretary post in the student union election of Dhaka College. Losing the election, he got detached from politics.

A few years ago, he got engaged in pre-shipment inspection (PSI) and clearing and forwarding business with his brother-in-law. It became a main source of his income.

He along with some of his friends also started a cafe called Kabana at Banani-27 last year but it was closed following a brawl with a lawmaker there a few months ago over a woman, according to his associates.

Officials aware of Rony's licence said many ruling party men were given arms licence without following due procedures.

"Rony is just one of them," said a senior official, on condition of anonymity.

Because of wholesale issuing of gun licences, the government has lost count of arms bought against those. Officials say the home ministry is now preparing a database for the licences and the guns.

Greece crisis deepens

FROM PAGE 1

a request for a third bailout from the eurozone's bailout fund lasting two years and amounting to €29.1bn.

In his address on Wednesday Mr Tsipras thanked Greeks for their "calm" in the face of bank closures and said their salaries and pensions would "not be lost".

He angrily denied he had a secret plan to take Greece out of the euro, calling those who accused him of this "liars".

Greek banks did not open this week after the ECB froze their liquidity lifeline.

Withdrawals from cash machines are capped at just €60 a day and long queues have been forming outside banks.

However, up to 1,000 branches reopened on Wednesday to allow pensioners - many of whom do not use bank cards - a one-off weekly withdrawal of up to €120.

Many pensioners had waited outside banks from before dawn, only to be told to return on Thursday or Friday, AP reports. Some pensioners were told their pensions had not yet been deposited.

"It's very bad," said Popi Stavrakaki, 68. "I'm afraid it will be worse soon. I have no idea why this is happening."

Close to 300 pensioners marched on the Bank of Greece in Athens after

being given only a small sum from banks in the morning instead of the entire €120.

After Mr Tsipras' latest letter was published, European markets surged on the news Greece might be willing to accept a deal.

But German Chancellor Angela Merkel said during a special parliamentary session in Berlin that no new bailout talks would be possible before Greece holds Sunday's referendum.

Mr Dijsselbloem said eurozone finance ministers agreed that "given the political situation, the rejection of the previous proposals, the referendum which will take place on Sunday, and the recommendation by the Greek government to vote No, we see no grounds for further talks at this point."

BBC Europe correspondent Chris Morris says that as well as seeking further amendments to the creditors' proposals, Mr Tsipras's latest offer is tied explicitly to agreement on a request for a third bailout.

In other words, Mr Tsipras is attaching new conditions to any agreement on economic and structural reforms, our correspondent says.

And his application for a third bailout was accompanied by a request for debt restructuring that other eurozone countries would, at this stage, be

unwilling to consider, he adds.

Also on Wednesday, officials with the European Central Bank (ECB) were due to decide on whether to demand more collateral from Greek banks on emergency loans it has given them.

With the previous eurozone bailout expired, Greece no longer has access to billions of euros in funds.

Athens missed the deadline for a €1.5bn (£1.1bn, \$1.7bn) payment to the IMF on Tuesday.

Only three other countries are still in arrears to the IMF - Sudan, Somalia and Zimbabwe. Between them, they owe €1.6bn, only marginally more than Greece.

The European Commission - one of the "troika" of creditors along with the IMF and the ECB - wants Athens to raise taxes and cut welfare spending to meet its debt obligations.

Greece's left-wing Syriza government, elected on an anti-austerity platform, has been in deadlock with its creditors for months over the terms of a third bailout.

Last weekend, the Greek government took the unilateral decision to hold a vote, angering eurozone ministers.

EU leaders have warned that a "No" vote would see Greece leave the eurozone - though Mr Tsipras says he does not want this to happen.

Rony fired shots

FROM PAGE 1

Ballistic tests have confirmed that the gun, licensed to Rony, was used to fire shots leading to the death of the two people. Rony has been remanded thrice in the case.

Three friends of Rony and his driver in their statements before metropolitan magistrates said Bakhtiar lowered the window of his sport-utility vehicle after it got stuck in a traffic jam in New Eskaton, and fired four to five shots around 1:30am, hitting rickshaw-puller Abdul Hakim and CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver Yakub Ali. They died in a hospital later.

Rony would be produced before a court today on expiry of his two-day remand, Monirul added.

Tribunal to try

FROM PAGE 1

Razakars did not appear before the court after publication of newspaper advertisements to that end.

The law enforcers had earlier failed to apprehend them as well.

The fugitives are Gazi Abdul Mannan, alleged commander of Karimganj Razakar camp, and alleged Razakar members Nasiruddin Ahmed, Hafiz Uddin and Azharul Islam.

The tribunal also appointed Abdus Shukur Khan as their counsel to defend them in the case and fixed July 28 for hearing on the charges.

The prosecution on May 10 pressed seven charges against five war crimes accused including the four fugitives. Of the five, only Shamsuddin Ahmed, 60, is behind bars.

The charges include mass killing, murder, confinement, torture, arson and looting committed in Karimganj upazila in between August 25 and November 13 in 1971, according to the prosecution.

The tribunal on June 1 ordered its registrar's office to take necessary steps in publishing advertisements in national dailies asking the four fugitives to appear before it by June 30.

But, the fugitives did not show up as of June 30, prosecutor Rezia Sultana Chaman told the tribunal yesterday, seeking a next order.

The tribunal once again expressed discontent over failure in arresting the fugitives.

As the prosecutor prayed for the next order, Justice Rahim said: "The accused cannot be arrested. What order would we issue now?"

As she sought date for charge hearing, the justice said: "Will all the trial have to be held in absentia?"

Earlier on several occasions, the tribunal expressed discontent over the issue and directed the government to form a monitoring committee in 15 days to secure arrest of the fugitive convicts and accused in war crimes cases, which the government complied.

The tribunal also expressed dissatisfaction over a counsel of Shamsuddin Ahmed for his lack of preparations.

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