

Iran hangs 13

AFP, Tehran
Iran hanged 13 convicted criminals yesterday, including the mother of two young children who had been found guilty of murdering her husband after discovering he was having an affair, reports said.
Raheleh Zamani was hanged alongside seven men convicted of murder at Tehran's Evin prison, the Iranian Student Correspondents' Association (ISCA) reported.
Three drug traffickers were also hanged on Wednesday in a square in the central city of Qom and another two in the eastern city of Zahedan, state media reported.
The executions, the first reported in 2008, were the latest in a growing number of executions in the Islamic republic as the authorities impose a drive they say is aimed at improving security in society.
ISCA said Raheleh had killed her husband Mohammad in 2005 by beating his head with an iron bar after discovering he was having an affair with another woman. She then chopped up the body and hid the pieces in several containers.
ISCA is one of several student news agencies in Iran and is run by Azad University.
The reformist Etemad newspaper reported on December 17 that Raheleh was the mother of a five-year-old girl and a three-year-old boy and had begged for forgiveness from the victim's family.
"My husband was having an affair with another woman and I was under the influence of the pills I took," ISCA quoted Raheleh as saying during her trial.
Raheleh had been due to be hanged on December 19, but was given a last-minute stay of execution to allow her more time to reach a settlement with her in-laws, reports at the time said.
Under Iranian law, a victim's family can ask right up to the moment before an execution that a murderer's life be spared and blood money be paid instead.

86 journo killed in deadly year for world media

AFP, Paris
At least 86 journalists were killed around the world in 2007, the highest number since 1994, with Iraq, Somalia and Pakistan topping the list of most dangerous places, according to a report released yesterday by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).
More than half of the victims - 48 - were journalists from the Middle East and Africa, while 17 came from Asia, 12 from Africa, seven from the Americas and two from Europe and the former Soviet Union.
Twenty media assistants were also killed in connection with their work, compared to 32 last year, according to the press watchdog which says 90 percent of all such killings habitually go unpunished.
The death toll among journalists has well over doubled since 2002, reaching its highest level

since the record violence of 1994, when 103 journalists were killed, nearly half of them in the Rwandan genocide.
Iraq remained the world's deadliest country for media workers, with 47 killed last year and at least 207 since the US-led invasion in March 2003.
"No country has ever seen more journalists killed than Iraq... more than in the Vietnam War, the fighting in ex-Yugoslavia, the massacres in Algeria or the Rwanda genocide," RSF said.
RSF said the "Iraqi and US authorities - themselves guilty of serious violence against journalists - must take firm steps to end these attacks."
Somalia was the second deadliest country for the press, with eight journalists killed as fighting pitted Islamist militants against Somalia's transitional government and its ally Ethiopia.

Six journalists were killed in Pakistan, where RSF said suicide attacks and heavy fighting between the army and Islamist militants partly accounted for the deaths.
Sixty-seven journalists were kidnapped, and 14 are currently held hostage, all of them in Iraq, RSF said.
At least two journalists were arrested each day in 2007, with 135 journalists currently imprisoned worldwide, according to RSF which called for their "immediate release."
The highest number of overall arrests were in Pakistan (195), Cuba (55) and Iran (54).
Internet dissidents faced a tough year of repression, with 65 people currently detained over online reporting - 50 of them in China - and at least 2,676 websites and chat rooms either shut down or suspended.

'People unaware of health rights'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A workshop on operationalise Charter of Clients Rights (CCR) for health was held at Brac Centre Inn auditorium in the city yesterday.
Speaking as the chief guest at the workshop, Dr Shahjahan Biswas, director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said, "People are unaware of their health rights. We need to create awareness among common people about their rights."
Healthcare services providers should also be careful regarding their duties and responsibilities, he added.
He also said participation of people is possible by improving quality of healthcare services and through operationalising CCR.
Prof Hosna Ara Tahmin, additional director general of DGHS, said we have different kinds of hindrances towards providing quality services to the clients or patients.
Yasmin H Ahmed, managing director of Marie Stopes Bangladesh, presented the keynote paper at the workshop.
The participants prepared a combined plan of action to improve the quality of healthcare in establishing rights of the clients.
The workshop was organised by DGHS and supported by Marie Stopes Bangladesh, says a press release.



Secretary for environment and forest AHM Rezaul Kabir speaks at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is Abdus Samad and on his left are Director General of Environment Dr Khandakar Rashidul Haque and World Conservation Union (IUCN) Country Representative Dr Ainun Nishat. (Story on Page-16)

Ctg autorickshaws queue for meters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong
Hundreds of CNG-run autorickshaws thronged the meter installation companies in the port city yesterday in the wake of the drastic operation launched by the traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) on Tuesday.
CMP traffic department seized about 70 autorickshaws from different points in the port city yesterday. Assistant Commissioner (AC) Tofiqul Alam of traffic department said most of the autorickshaws having no meters or plying with inoperative meters did not ply the city streets yesterday as the number of seized autorickshaws was less than that of the first day.
Hundreds of autorickshaws were seen waiting in long queues to install meters or to repair the damaged ones at different meter installation firms.
Al Amin, a staff of Crystal Agency at Dewanhat Intersection, said the conducted servicing in at least 50 autorickshaws till yesterday afternoon.



A woman gathers rice leaking out of sacks at Badamtali wholesale market in the city yesterday. Spiralling prices of rice has forced her to collect rice this way for her family. PHOTO: STAR

Sudan army misses new deadline to quit south

AFP, Juba
Khartoum has missed a new deadline to withdraw its troops from south Sudan, flouting a deal that saw former rebels rejoin the government last week, a senior rebel commander said yesterday.
"They have not moved up to now," Major General Mai Hoth, deputy chief of staff of the southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army said. "They haven't given us a concrete reason."
The promise to pull northern troops out of the southern autonomous region by the end of 2007 was part of an agreement that paved the way for the former rebels to rejoin the national unity government on December 27, ending a two-month crisis.
The rebels' withdrawal from the cabinet in October was the worst crisis to hit a 2005 peace deal that ended Africa's longest-running civil war. An estimated two million people were killed and another six million displaced in the two-decade-long conflict.
Khartoum's failure to meet an earlier deadline for the troop pull-out was one of the key reasons cited by the former rebels for quitting the government.
Under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which created a southern autonomous government and two separate armies, northern troops should have withdrawn from the south by July 9, 2007.
However, the north had only moved two-thirds of its forces by that date, according to the United Nations, setting off a protracted war of words that culminated in the south recalling its ministers from the unity government.

Fire ravages renowned London hospital

AFP, London
Patients were evacuated Wednesday as an internationally-renowned cancer hospital in London was ravaged by fire which engulfed its roof, emergency services and witnesses said.
Smoke and flames billowed from the Royal Marsden Hospital in west London, television images showed, while ambulances and firefighters rushed to the scene.
"We have sent 10 ambulances, five officers, our hazardous area response team and a fast response car to the scene," said a spokesman for the London Ambulance Service.
Eight fire engines and 40 firefighters were dispatched to deal with the blaze, a spokesman for London Fire Brigade said.
"We're currently evacuating patients. We don't have numbers at the moment," said a spokesman, while witnesses said patients were huddled out in blankets, some of them kept in ambulances.
The Royal Marsden was the first hospital in the world dedicated to the study and treatment of cancer.
With The Institute of Cancer Research, it forms the largest comprehensive cancer centre in Europe, seeing more than 40,000 patients from the UK and abroad each year.

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Date : January 6, 2008
Time : 3:45 pm
Venue : The Meeting Hall of Agrabad Hotel
Chief Guest : Mr. Amir Humayan Mahmud Chowdhury
Honorary Consul of Thailand in Chittagong

Seminar at Dhaka
Date : January 8, 2008
Time : 3:45 pm
Venue : The Faculty of Business, Northern University Bangladesh
Chief Guest : His Excellency Mr. Chalermpol Thanchitt
The Ambassador of Royal Thai Embassy in Bangladesh.
Presided Over : Professor Dr. M. Shamsul Haque
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US military says 51 Qaeda leaders killed or captured

AFP, Baghdad
The US military said yesterday that 51 Al-Qaeda leaders were killed or captured by multinational forces in Iraq during December, as efforts to close down the Islamist extremist group intensified.
One senior Al-Qaeda figure who was found guilty of terrorism in an Iraqi court on Sunday had spoken in detail about the organisation and its foreign leadership, added US military spokesman Major General Kevin Bergner.
Of those captured in December, "eight were regional, city or functional emirs, nine were cell leaders, six were involved in media and propaganda activities and five that were foreigner terrorist facilitators," Bergner said.
He said the others were involved in bomb-making, or were spiritual advisers, financiers, intelligence gatherers or weapons traffickers.
Among those captured was the leader of Al-Qaeda in the northern city of Baiji and the regional leader in charge from west Baghdad to Fallujah, Bergner said, adding that several had direct contact with Al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri.
The Al-Qaeda member who spoke about the group's power structure was captured in July and "specifically stated that the Islamic State of Iraq is a front organisation for Al-Qaeda in Iraq that serves to mask the foreign domination of its leadership," Bergner told a news conference.
The man also "revealed that 'Omar al-Baghdadi' is a fictional character or figurehead created by Abu Ayyub al-Masri, an Egyptian, to give Al-Qaeda in Iraq's foreign leadership more of an Iraqi face," said Bergner.
The existence of Baghdadi is disputed, with audio messages purportedly recorded by him speaking as leader of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq group.
"Iraqis have increasingly rejected Al-Qaeda in Iraq and their indiscriminate violence, the Taliban-like ideology and the barbaric torture and intimidation," said Bergner.
On Saturday Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden warned Sunni Muslims in Iraq not to take up arms against his militant network, saying those who did were "traitors."

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