

3 death-row convicts executed

The Yomiuri Shimbun

Three death-row convicts, including a 44-year-old man who was given the death sentence for kidnapping and murdering a young girl in Nara Prefecture in 2004, were executed Thursday morning, the Justice Ministry said on the day.

They were the first executions to occur under the new administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the first since two convicts were put to death on Sept. 27 last year.

After the latest three executions in Osaka, Tokyo and Nagoya, the total number of death-row inmates stood at 134.

The number of executions declined under Democratic Party of Japan-led administrations. In 2011, no executions were carried out, the first time this had occurred since 1992.

Executions resumed last March with the first death sentence to be carried out in 20 months. Last year, seven death-row convicts were executed.

Justice Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki, who assumed his post late last year, gave the final approval for the three executions.

Thursday's deaths included Kaoru Kobayashi, who kidnapped and murdered a 7-year-old girl in Nara Prefecture; Masahiro Kanagawa, 29, who stabbed and injured 9 people, two fatally, in Tsuchiura, Ibaraki Prefecture, in March 2008; and Keiki Kano (formerly Keiki Muto), 62, who murdered and stole money from a 61-year-old bar owner in Nagoya in March 2002.

Kobayashi used his vehicle to kidnap a first grader in Nara while she was on her way home from primary school in November 2004. He drowned the girl in the bathtub at his house in Sango, Nara Prefecture, and abandoned the body. He was later charged with eight crimes, including

Recent executions

	Justice minister	Date	Number of people executed	Total
LDP	Kunio Hatoyama	Dec. 2007	3	13
		Feb. 2008	3	
		Apr.	4	
		June	3	
	Okiharu Yasuoka	Sept.	3	3
	Eisuke Mori	Oct.	2	9
Jan. 2009		4		
July		3		
DPJ	Keiko Chiba	July 2010	2	2
	Minoru Yanagida	—	0	0
	Yoshito Sengoku	—	0	0
	Satsuki Eda	—	0	0
	Hideo Hiraoka	—	0	0
	Toshio Ogawa	March 2012	3	3
	Minoru Taki	Aug.	2	4
		Sept.	2	
	Keishu Tanaka	—	0	0
Minoru Taki	—	0	0	
LDP	Sadakazu Tanigaki	Feb. 2013	3	3

murder and kidnapping with the intent of an obscene act.

He was given the death sentence by a district court in September 2006. Although the defense appealed the case, Kobayashi dropped the appeal the following month, which had the effect of confirming his death sentence. In December 2008, he sought a retrial, which was rejected in May 2009, again confirming his sentence.

Kanagawa, charged with murder, was given the death sentence by the court of first instance in December 2009. Although his defense counsel appealed, Kanagawa also dropped his appeal and had his sentence finalized.

Before he was given the death penalty by the court of first instance, he told The Yomiuri Shimbun that unless he was executed soon, he would go to court, calling for an early execution.

Kano, who was charged with murder and robbery, was given an indefinite prison term by the court of first instance in May 2003, with the judge explaining, "The crimes were not of a premeditated nature."

In February 2004, a high court handed down a death sentence, reversing the ruling of a district court, saying the death penalty was appropriate for the case. In March 2007, the Supreme Court rejected Kano's appeal, finalizing his sentence.

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