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Twins die

Massive blood loss ends historic surgery on conjoined Iranians

SINGAPORE: Pioneering surgery to separate Iranian twins joined at the head ended in tragedy yesterday when the women died from massive blood loss on the operating table soon after doctors separated their enmeshed brains.

The deaths of Laleh and Ladan Bijani, 29, abruptly halted a historic 50-hour operation by a team of 28 specialists and 100 assistants at Raffles Hospital to separate siblings fused at the head, or craniopagus twins, as doctors call the condition.

Hundreds of supporters and friends of the twins wept and hugged each other.

"When we undertook this challenge we knew the risks were great," hospital chairman Loo Choon Yong told reporters. "We knew that one of the scenarios was that we may lose both of them. Ladan and Laleh knew it too.

"We were hoping to try and do better than the worst odds. But alas we didn't make it."

Ladan began to lose blood at around 2pm and died at 2.30pm, doctors said. Brain surgery continued on Laleh, who died at 4pm.

"Raffles Hospital regrets to announce that the Bijani twins, Ladan and Laleh, have both passed away during surgery to separate them," the hospital said. "The twins lost a lot of blood and were in a critical situation as the surgery was coming to an end."

Ladan, the more outspoken twin, had wanted to lead a separate life as a lawyer in her hometown of Shiraz, while Laleh



OVERCOME BY EMOTION: A member of the Iranian community weeping during the announcement of the death of the Bijani twins at the Raffles Hospital in Singapore yesterday. Hundreds of supporters and friends of the twins had gathered at the hospital in a show of support. — APpic

Toddler sole survivor in Sudan air crash

KHARTOUM: A two-year-old girl was the only survivor after a Sudan Airways plane crashed on a domestic flight just after dawn yesterday, killing 115 people.

A Sudan Airways spokesman said the toddler, Lena Abdallah, had been taken to hospital in Port Sudan and Sudanese TV said she was in good condition. It was not immediately clear whether her parents were on board.

The pilot of the Boeing 737 reported a technical failure a few minutes after taking off at about 4am (9am Malaysian time) from the Red Sea town of Port Sudan in the north-east, heading towards Khartoum, state radio said.

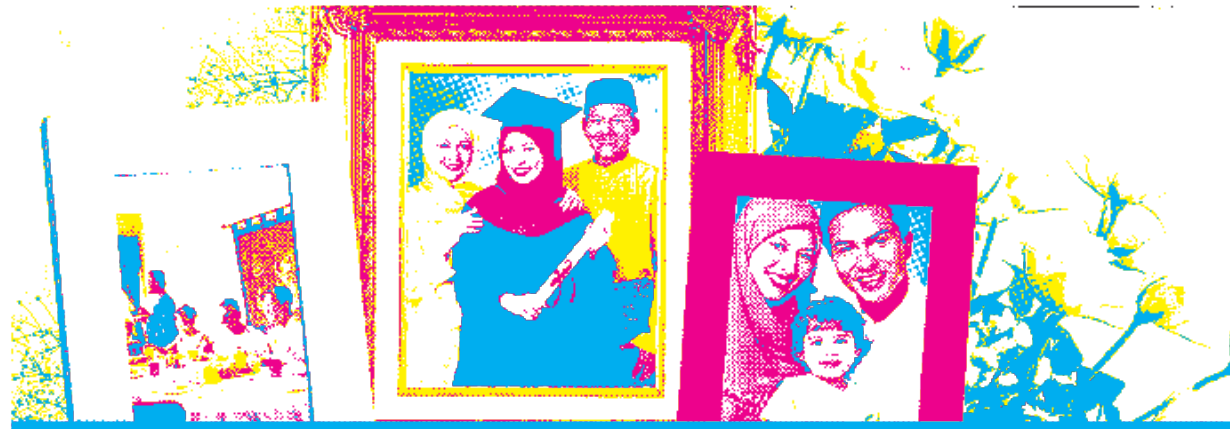
The plane crashed just a few kilometres away from Port Sudan airport as it returned in an attempt to land.

Residents of Port Sudan, fearing for their loved ones, rushed to the airport and gathered in nearby areas waiting for news. Residents of Khartoum made frantic checks to see if family or friends might have been on board.

A Sudan Airways employee said 104 passengers and 11 crew members were killed. Identification efforts began shortly after the crash, but it was unclear how many bodies

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