

BRIEFLY

Kidnapper executed in Karachi:

A 32-year-old man was hanged in a Karachi jail yesterday for kidnapping and raping a college student in the second execution in Pakistan within four days police said, AFP reports from Karachi.

Rafuddin Babli was sent to the gallows around 6:30 am (0130 GMT) amid tight security at the city's central prison. An accomplice in the 1997 kidnapping of Abdul Malik was sentenced to 10 years hard labour. Babli's appeal was rejected by a military appellate tribunal last week.

Romantic hero Manners dies:

David Manners, who played the romantic hero in such classic horror films as "Dracula" and "The Mummy," died on December 23. He was 98, AP reports from Santa Barbara.

Although he appeared in more than three dozen films, Manners was best known for playing the stalwart hero or the love interest in the horror films of the 1930s. He played Jonathan Harker to Bela Lugosi's Dracula in the 1931 film and fought to keep his lover from the clutches of Boris Karloff in 1932's "The Mummy."

KLA to launch radio station:

In a move to reinforce their independent image, Kosovo's ethnic Albanian rebels announced Sunday they were establishing a new radio station and news agency to promote their ideals, AP reports from Pristina.

The Kosovo Liberation Army, in a statement to ethnic Albanian journalists, said the station would be known as "Kosovo e Lire," or "Free Kosovo." The news agency would be called Kosovo Press. The statement did not say when the station would begin broadcasting or where it would be based. No frequency was given.

5,000 homes destroyed in Tajikistan:

Hurricane-force winds that struck northern Tajikistan destroyed 5,000 homes and left several thousand people homeless, the committee for emergencies said yesterday, AFP reports from Dushanbe.

The storm struck late Thursday in an area around Leninabad, tearing down houses and causing an estimated one million dollars in damages, Committee chairman Makhmadruzi Iskandarov said. No one was reported hurt.

28 die as rocket hits bus in Somalia:

At least 28 people were killed and 10 others wounded when an anti-tank rocket was fired at a bus near the southern Somali town of Baidoa, the newspaper Xogogal reported yesterday, AFP reports from Mogadishu.

The paper said that the bus was transporting civilians from Baidoa to Mogadishu at the time of the attack, which it said was carried out by the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA). The wounded and those who died were taken back to the main hospital in Baidoa, a nurse at the hospital said two of the wounded died in Baidoa overnight while three others remained in a critical condition.

Japan's 'Mother Teresa' dies:

Yaeko Nakamura, a woman adored as Japan's "Mother Teresa" for her dedication to orphans and the elderly, has died, relatives said yesterday. She was 93, AP reports from Tokyo.

Nakamura died on Saturday at a hospital in the western Japan city of Osaka where she had been suffering from the effects of a stroke in June 1997. Nakamura, joined by her husband Haruka, began her activities for the disadvantaged in 1931 by caring for the children of fishermen and others making their living on the waterfront near Osaka.



Iraqis wait to get their yearly food and medicine ration cards, which are allocated by the government, in front of the Al Muatasim centre in Baghdad on Sunday. Under the UN's oil-for-food programme Iraq can sell 5.2 billion dollars worth of crude every six months to buy basic food and medicines. — AP/UNB photo

Anti-military riots leave 13 dead in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Jan 4: The death toll in anti-military riots this weekend in a troubled Indonesian province rose to at least nine, police said today. One report said 13 people died, including two army officers, reports AP.

Violence erupted on Sunday in Aceh province after soldiers raided several buildings believed to harbour rebels who have been fighting for an independent Islamic state. Furious residents attacked the security forces, who responded with gunfire.

In the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, another region where separatist rebels operate, fighting between groups that oppose and support



Police inspect site of a bomb explosion near Lahore, Pakistan, Sunday. Four people were killed when a time bomb exploded on the bridge near Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's residence, just before Sharif was due to pass over the bridge. Police described the bomb attack as an assassination attempt. — AP/UNB photo

Senators oppose Clinton's State of Union address under trial



WASHINGTON, Jan 4: Sen-

ators from both parties say President Bill Clinton should not deliver his annual State of the Union address to Congress if the scheduled date conflicts with his impeachment trial in the Senate, reports AP.

The Jan 19 date for the speech thus provides a concrete deadline for senators now searching for a way to bring a quick end to the impeachment trial.

I think it would be unseemly and distracting for the president to be giving a State of the Union address to Congress while he was under trial in the Senate, Republican Sen Slade Gorton said Sunday on NBC's television show "Meet the Press."

Gorton and Democrat Joseph Lieberman are proposing a plan that could end the trial after four days.

Lieberman, also on NBC, agreed that Clinton's annual speech to outline his legislative goals for the year is "another reason why we have a very short window here to try to

work out a procedure for this trial. If we don't, we are going to descend, I fear, to the kind of partisan rancour that characterised the House proceeding," Judiciary Committee hearings that resulted in the first impeachment of a president in 130 years.

The speech must be postponed, Democratic Sen Robert Torricelli said, because as long as the trial continues, "The state of the union from the perspective of his administration is unclear."

And Republican Sen Phil Gramm said Clinton might resort to the practice of earlier presidents and submit his report in writing.

White House spokesman Jim Kennedy had no immediate comment on whether the president would deliver the speech as planned if the trial is still under way on Jan 19.

Congress convenes on Wednesday. The Senate's first order of business is to determine the shape of the trial on House-passed articles of impeachment, which charge the president with perjury and obstruction of justice in the Monica Lewinsky affair.

A two-thirds majority is needed to remove the president from office. While most senators are reluctant to say how they would vote, even Republicans who favoured conviction admitted they don't have the vote.

Momentum was building for the Gorton-Lieberman approach. Under that, from Jan 11 the House prosecutors and the White House would each have one day to present their

cases. Senators would then have a day to ask questions. Then, on the fourth day, they would vote whether charges against the president, even if true, were grave enough to remove him from office. If a two-thirds majority isn't reached, the Senate could adjourn the trial with a simple majority, then move to a possible impeachment motion against the president.

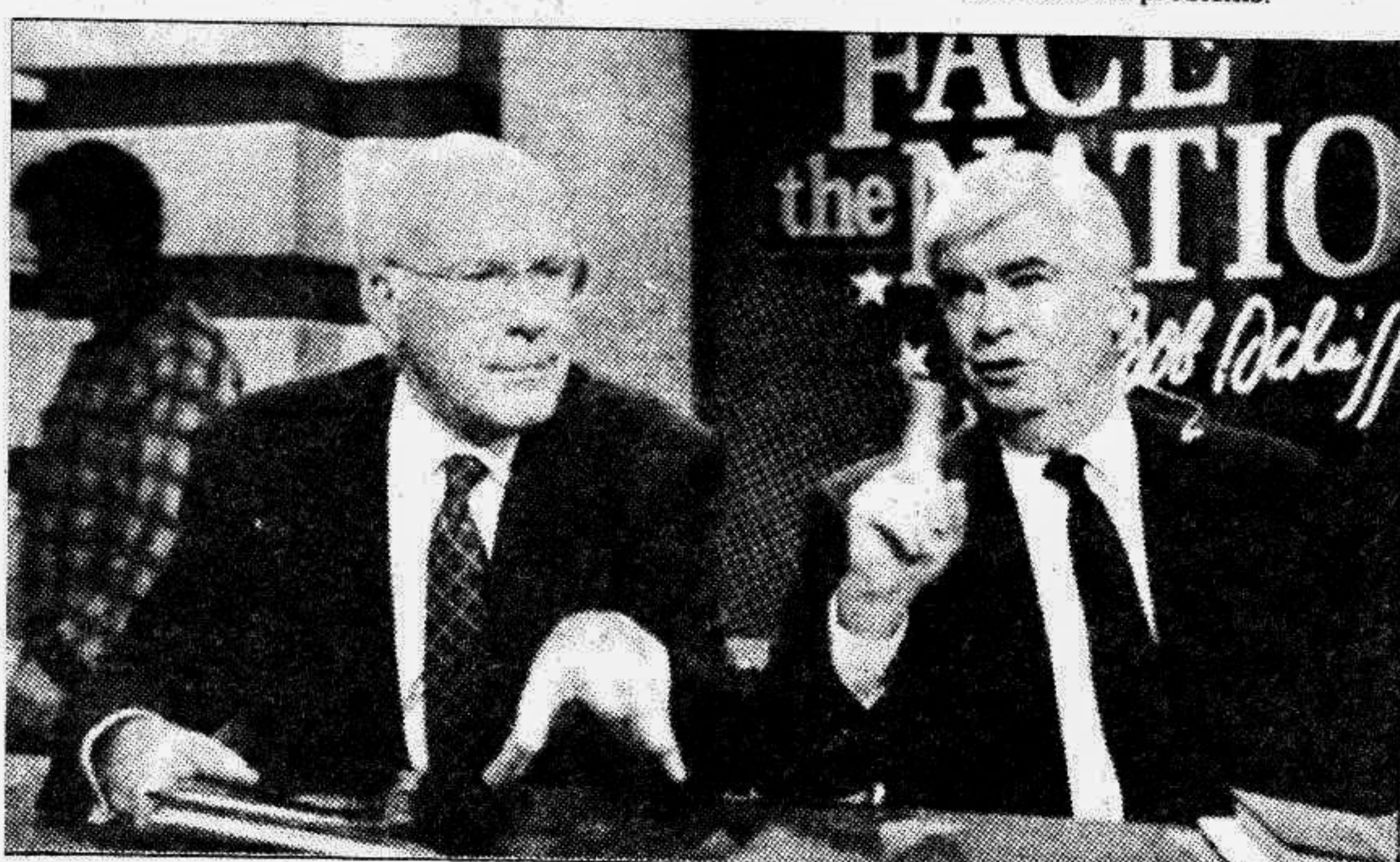
Senators on the Sunday

news programmes generally agreed that any resolution to censure the president for his affair with the former White House intern should not include a fine, a move that many view as constitutionally suspect.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, a Republican from Mississippi, in an interview with Time magazine, said the Gorton-Lieberman idea was a "fair start." He said he would be

criticized no matter what is decided from the left, which is demanding an end to the proceedings, and from the right, which wants a full trial with witnesses.

Republican leaders worry that a protracted trial interfering with legislative business would again cast the party as more interested in punishing the president than addressing the nation's problems.



Sen Patrick Leahy, left, and Sen Chris Dodd, talk about the upcoming impeachment trial of President Clinton on the set of the CBS talk show "Face the Nation" on Sunday in Washington. — AP/UNB photo

Troops destroy LTTE's bunker line in north

COLOMBO, Jan 4: Sri Lankan troops fired mortar bombs and destroyed a Tamil Tiger bunker line in the north of the country, killing three rebels as four more died elsewhere, the Defence Ministry said today, reports AFP.

Government soldiers attacked the defence line of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) near Mankulam on Sunday, a ministry statement said.

It said four rebels were killed in two separate encounters with the LTTE in the north on Sunday. The ministry did not say if security forces suffered any casualties in the clashes.

The Tiger guerrillas are leading a campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated.

NASA launches Mars Polar Lander

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida, Dec 4: A Mars lander equipped with an arm and shovel blasted off Sunday on a 756 million-kilometre quest to uncover frozen water near the planet's South Pole, reports AP.

NASA's Mars Polar Lander soared aboard a Boeing rocket at exactly 3:21 pm (2021 GMT). The rain that managers had feared stayed away, allowing NASA to meet the instantaneous launch window despite overcast sky.

The Polar Lander is bound for the frosty fringes of Mars' south polar cap. It's due to arrive in December when it's late spring and the sun never sets.

It will be virgin territory. No spacecraft has ever ventured so far south on Mars. As a result, scientists' expectations are high.

Their goal is to find water ice in the Martian soil. Where

there's water, NASA's top space scientist says, there could be life.

"You've got to follow the water if you're looking for life," said Ed Weiler, head of NASA's space science division.

"We have a lot of reason to believe there's water on Mars in the form of ice," he added. "But until you actually land there and find it and measure it, you can't say for sure. That's one thing I think this mission will demonstrate."

The Polar Lander — 3.5 feet (about 1 metre) tall and 12 feet (3.6 metres) wide — has three legs as well as a 6.5-foot (2-metre) robot arm with a scoop on the end to scrape beneath the Martian surface. The collected dirt will be heated, allowing any water that's present to vaporise and be detected by a laser.

It carries no life-detection

equipment. The only real way to confirm life on Mars, Weiler says, is to fetch rocks and soil. NASA plans to launch a soil-return mission in 2005; the samples would reach Earth in 2008.

The Polar Lander also is equipped with a pair of probes that will peel away minutes before touchdown and slam into the Martian surface at 644 kph to 850 kph, some 100 kilometres from the lander.

Like the lander, the twin probes also will hunt for water but at a much greater depth: They could penetrate as deep as 3 feet (1 metre). The question is whether they will survive the impact and radio back data. It's a high-risk experiment called Deep Space 2 that's part of NASA's New Millennium programme to test new technologies for future missions.

The Polar Lander is a companion to NASA's Mars Climate

Orbiter launched last month. The two missions cost 327 million dollars and Deep Space 2 another 29 million dollars.

NASA has landed spacecraft on Mars only three times: the two Vikings in 1976 and Pathfinder in 1997. All three landed in the Martian desert.

Scientists don't know what they're going to hear, either.

The Polar Lander is equipped with a tiny microphone. Many believe the only sounds that might be heard in the thin Martian atmosphere will be the movement of the robot arm and the internal systems of the lander. There's a possibility, however slight, that the sound of dust or sand blowing against the lander also might be picked up.

"That's the fun part of science," said Weiler. "We don't know what we're going to hear."

Police foils US cult members' bloody plot in Jerusalem

MOZA, Israel, Jan 4: Israeli police shattered a veneer of serenity in Jerusalem's wooded suburbs, detaining 14 missing members of a Denver-based cult and foiling what they said was a bloody plot the apocalyptic groups hoped would bring Christ's return, reports AP.

A senior police source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the cult members planned violent acts in Jerusalem's walled Old City and that one possible location was the Temple Mount, the site of Jewish-Arab tensions in the past.

The source said cult members believed that being killed by police "would lead them to heaven."

"They planned to carry out violent and extreme acts in the streets of Jerusalem at the end of 1998 to start the process of bringing Jesus back to life," said Brig Gen Elhuz Ben-Onn, the national police spokesman.

The cult drama three days into 1999 raised the curtain on what Israeli authorities fear could be turbulence leading up to the turn of the millennium. Tens of thousands of Christian pilgrims are expected to visit the Holy Land this year, but officials worry the millennium also will draw deranged extremists seeking to live out apocalyptic fantasies.

The suspects were arrested Sunday from two spacious houses two km apart on

Jerusalem's hilly western outskirts.

The homes were the picture of American-style comfort: Vans in the driveway, a wooden trellis, kids sharing their Barbie dolls in the yard.

Neighbours said the people living there were unfailingly pleasant if remote.

The Americans first appeared in August: some would disappear, and others would come. People who would claim to be members of the same family would not interrelate like family, neighbours said.

The cult members — including three families as well as individuals — did not resist arrest when police raided.

The Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, was heavily involved in the swoop. The Americans had been under surveillance for the past month.

Cult leader Monte Kim Miller, 44, was not among those detained; police said he was not in Israel. Police would not release names of the suspects.

Police said they intend to ask the Interior Ministry, which grants or revokes foreigners' permission to remain in Israel, to deport them.

Police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby said the children and their mothers were in an "institutional office" — not jail — but that the men were "in custody." The group, he said, would not necessarily appear in court.

Worst blizzard in US takes 10 lives

CHICAGO, Jan 4: Hundreds of thousands of travellers were stranded at airports across the US midwest on Sunday as the region dug itself out of one of its worst blizzards in history, reports AP.

"The blizzard of 1999," which wreaked havoc in several states Saturday, is one for the history books, according to meteorologists.

Ten deaths have been blamed on the storm so far, six people died in a Minnesota house fire and one woman was killed in a Missouri traffic accident blamed on icy roads.

In Iowa, one person died in accident, another in an apparent storm-related fall, and a third of a heart attack while shovelling snow.

In Chicago, where snow removal crews worked around the clock to clear major roads, the blizzard dumped a whopping 55 centimeters of snow by Sunday morning. It was the second worst snowstorm in local history, that nearly tied the record of 57.5 centimeters established on January 26-27, 1967, forecasters said.

The powerful winter storm, which has now moved east, also dumped heavy snowfalls on Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin.

In Detroit, residents began digging out from their worst blizzard in five years which dropped nearly a foot of snow in less than 18 hours.

The local office of the American Automobile Association said during the height of the storm, it fielded 3,021 distress calls from motorists.

Residents of the historic Pullman area of Chicago on Sunday begin to shovel out 21 inches of snow that pummeled the Midwest on Saturday. — AP/UNB photo

The future — As predicted in 1900

NEW YORK, Jan 4: Electric lights will diminish crime and pavements will be kept sparkling clean. The new sport of hockey should increase in popularity but Brooklyn will lose its baseball team. Japan will become mighty and Germany will annex Poland, reports AP.

These were some of the predictions at the dawn of the 20th century as reported by The Brooklyn Daily Eagle in an edition headlined "Things will be so different a hundred years hence."

On Sunday, Newsday of Long Island reprinted that entire 16-page issue of the Eagle, dated Dec 30, 1900, as "a reminder of how much the world has changed, and is changing, still."

Some of the Eagle's crystal-ball readings were astoundingly sound. "The most potent force in modern commercial distribution, advertising, is sure to have a larger part in the world's life the coming hundred years than it has ever had before," read one article.

Among the Eagle's essayists was suffragist Susan B. Anthony. Writing 20 years before the US Constitution was amended in 1920 to guarantee

women the right to vote, she predicted it would come to pass and added that women would become "the peer of man in education, in art, in science, in literature, in the home, the church, the state."

Another writer predicted that "the union of the telephone and phonograph" would bring theatre, opera, lectures and mass meetings "into the salon of one's own home. Under these circumstances people of the twentieth century are likely to become confirmed stay-at-homes."

But some writers got it all wrong. One said the disappearance of horse carriages would eliminate house flies and street noise, another predicted that "smooth, sanitary pavements used by posterity will be kept thoroughly clean," and one headline proclaimed "Science may find means to bring dead to life."

Some observations from the Eagle show how little things have changed, such as this one: "The poor are dependent for their education on the public schools. The rich select the best private schools where their sons may receive careful personal attention of teachers such as it is impossible for the over-

burdened public school teacher to give to the members of her larger class."

An article on sports complained about the "chaotic state" of baseball, blaming the owners for exploiting the players. The article also predicted that Brooklyn's baseball team would be "forced out" despite an argument that "the city is big enough to maintain two clubs."

The Brooklyn Dodgers ended up moving to Los Angeles in 1958.

One article predicted the "imminence of aerial transport" consisting of "the motor, driven balloon and the aeroplane."

A page on global affairs got a few things wrong. Writing 14 years before World War I, one writer said the development of an "international court will prevent war." He also forecast the emergence of a French-Italian state and said Turkey would join with Hungary to "become one of the four first-class powers of Europe."

But the same writer also got a few things right, predicting that England would be "shorn of power," Japan would become mighty, and that Germany would annex Poland and merge with Austria.

Now Elizabeth Dole seems aspirant

WASHINGTON, Jan 4: Elizabeth Dole, the wife of former Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, is taking the first steps towards what seems to be a run for the US presidency in 2000, Newsweek magazine reported.

Dole, 62, plans to announce today that she is resigning her job as president of the American Red Cross, the magazine reports in its January 11 edition.

In a June 1998 USA Today-CNN-Gallup poll, Elizabeth Dole tied with vice president Al Gore in a hypothetical presidential race.

The decision is a "first step" towards a possible campaign for the Republican presidential nomination, a close adviser told the magazine.

Giving up her job is a "non-political event," according to the adviser, however it will allow Dole time to raise money for a possible presidential bid before key primaries in March 2000 in California, New York and the southern United States.

Dole's husband, Bob Dole, 74, was along time US Republican senator from Kansas who made three unsuccessful presidential bids, the latest in 1996.

Chilean govt to insist on holding Pinochet's trial in his country

SANTIAGO, Jan 4: The Chilean government plans not to defend Augusto Pinochet personally but rather argue that the former dictator must be judged in the country where his alleged crimes were committed, Chile's acting foreign minister said in an interview published on Sunday, reports AP.

The daily El Mercurio reported that Chile will ask on Thursday to be heard in a January 18 hearing in which British law lords will decide whether the 83-year-old Pinochet should remain under arrest while the extradition process takes place or whether he can return to Chile.

Chile's contention since Pinochet's October arrest in a London clinic that the senator-for-life has diplomatic immunity from prosecution.

Acting Foreign Minister Mariano Fernandez told El Mercurio that the "Principle of territoriality" will be one of the points on which lawyers will try to get Pinochet to be allowed to return home.

Sihanouk willing to stand trial with Khmer Rouge

PHNOM PENH, Jan 4: Stung by reminders in the press of his past support of the notorious Khmer Rouge, King Norodom Sihanouk reiterated Monday that he is willing to stand trial alongside the architects of Cambodia's genocide, reports AP.

In a statement faxed from Beijing, where the ailing king is receiving medical treatment, Sihanouk said he would renounce his royal immunity from prosecution to allow a tribunal to judge whether he was involved in atrocities committed during the murderous reign of the Khmer Rouge.

"As I've said and written several times, I am ready to appear in front of a tribunal (Cambodian or international) in charge of judging the Khmer Rouge and their real or supposed accomplices," the king said.

Critics select 'Out of Sight' as best film of '98

NEW YORK, Jan 4: "Out of Sight," a film starring George Clooney as a hapless bank robber who falls for a federal agent, garnered best picture and best director honours from the National Society of Film Critics on Sunday, reports AP.

The movie co-stars Jennifer Lopez as the agent who has more brains and is just as daring as the crooks she deal with.

Director Steven Soderbergh, who also directed the 1989 hit "Sex, Lies, and Videotape," beat out Terrence Malick ("The Thin Red Line") Steven Spielberg ("Saving Private Ryan") for best director honours.

The National Society also honoured "The Thin Red Line" with best cinematography honours and named "Taste of Cherry," an Iranian film, as the year's best foreign language film.

ROK govt accused of spying on opposition legislators

SEOUL, Jan 4: The main opposition party claimed Monday it has evidence that President Kim Dae-jung's government illegally spied on opposition legislators, reports AP.

The ruling camp vowed to bring criminal charges against opposition members who broke into a room in the parliament building last week and seized government intelligence documents.

The break-in followed allegations by an opposition legislator that room 529 in the National Assembly building was used by government intelligence agents to spy on opposition politicians.

Opposition legislators seized several dozen documents from the room, which had been used by members of the Agency for National Security Planning, the main government spy agency.