

**First planet outside solar system detected**

**NEW YORK, July 25:** Astronomers say they have detected the first known planet outside the solar system, an object that orbits a very dense star and is perhaps 12 times as massive as Earth, reports AP.

The report challenges scientists' understanding of how some stars form.

"This object I think is going to require some degree of wild speculation to explain," said Harvard astronomy professor Ramesh Narayan, who was familiar with the work.

Other researchers have reported apparent detections of planets outside the solar system before, but some reports have been refuted and none is widely accepted.

Princeton University physics professor Joseph Taylor said he found the new report persuasive. "They've got something there that is significant, no question about it," he said.

**Remnants of clothes worn by Rajiv handed over**

**MADRAS, July 25 :** The remnants of the clothes worn by Rajiv Gandhi at the time of his assassination on May 21 were handed over yesterday to the advocates of Mrs Sonia Gandhi by the special court for the assassination case here, reports PTI.

Mrs Nalini Chidambaram Counsel for Mrs Sonia Gandhi, received from the Special Judge, S M Siddick, a packet containing the blood-stained underwear, a piece of cloth from a pair of trousers and another piece of cloth.

The CBI had been directed by the court last week to hand over the pieces of clothing following a petition from Mrs Sonia Gandhi who wanted them for 'sentimental reasons' she had assured the court that they would be preserved in the present condition and would be produced in court whenever required during trial.

David Black, director of the Lunar and Planetary Institute in Houston, called the study "a good start" toward a convincing case for the planet's existence.

The detection is reported in Thursday's issue of the British journal Nature by Andrew Lyne, Matthew Bailes and Setnam Shemar of the University of Manchester's Nuffield Radio Astronomy Laboratories in Jodrell Bank, England.

"We were very surprised," Lyne said in a telephone interview.

The scientists detected the apparent planet by analyzing radio waves from a very dense object called a neutron star.

**Benazir demands snap elections**

**PPP man tortured to implicate Zardari in judge's murder**

**KARACHI, July 25 :** A spokesman for the Pakistan People's Party of Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto Wednesday accused police of torturing party activists, including women, reports Reuter.

Iqbal Haider told a news conference that police seeking information about the party had detained women activists upside down at police stations in the port of Karachi.

A police spokesman denied the charge.

Haider, a member of the upper house of parliament, said the alleged torture was "the worst case of human rights violations in Pakistan."

He said police had also tortured party activist Rajab Ali Brohi after the murder last month of a judge trying Bhutto's jailed husband Asif Ali Zardari.

Brohi was asked to implicate Zardari in the murder, he said.

Hundreds of party activists were arrested in the southern province of Sindh after gunmen killed judge Nabi Sher Junejo in the provincial capital Karachi.

AFP adds from Islamabad: Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, accusing Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of creating political and economic crisis in Pakistan, demanded snap elections Wednesday.

Talking to reporters on her return from a foreign tour, the former Premier lambasted a recently-passed parliamentary bill giving extraordinary powers to the government, saying it amounted to a vote of no-confidence in the judiciary.

Under the bill, now awaiting presidential approval, the federal government can set up special courts to punish people accused of such crimes as kidnappings, terrorism, and murders.

Her party has alleged that the new powers be used to intensify victimization of political opponents, particularly in southern Sindh, Ms. Bhutto's home province.

Sharif has said he needed extraordinary powers to combat extraordinary crimes, and has promised there would be no misuse of the system aimed at quickly punishing criminals.

Ms. Bhutto said the legislation, which amends the constitution to vest the government with special powers for three years, was in fact a "Civil Martial Law Regulation" representing an "insult" to democracy, parliament and superior courts.

The bill was "bulldozed" through in violation of parliamentary rules, she said, echoing the attacks by her party which has asked President Ghulam Ishaq Khan to block the move.

"It will destroy the judicial system of Pakistan, it's a conspiracy," she said.

Her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has said it would hold a strong of anti-government rallies starting by the end of this month.

Referring to the dismissal of Kashmiri Premier Mumtaz Hussain Rathore early July, Ms. Bhutto said the federal government was showing the same "high-handedness" which marked "Indian actions" in the territory controlled by New Delhi.

Mrs Bhutto called for re-election in Azad Kashmir, the name for Pakistani part of Kashmir, to restore the confidence of the people.

Rathore was dismissed and detained July 5 after he rejected June 29 state elections alleging fraud by Islamabad



ing political and economic crisis in Pakistan, demanded snap elections Wednesday.

**Shamir rejects territorial compromise, Arafat terms US peace plan a 'plot'**

**Tel AVIV, July 25:** Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir on Wednesday rejected any "territorial compromise" in the Middle East peace process and ruled out participation in any Middle East peace talks by Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, reports AFP.

I would prefer to be accused of being the one who blocked the peace process rather than be the one who sold off Jerusalem he said.

Israel annexed east Jerusalem in 1967 after the six day war between Israel and Arab states.

The Prime Minister also dismissed any participation in the peace process by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

His comments followed a proposal by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that Israel stop building new settlements on the occupied West Bank and Gaza strip in exchange for a suspension of a longstanding Arab boycott of the Jewish state.

The Palestinians of East Jerusalem will not be members of any (Palestinian) delegation Shamir said adding that the PLO would not even be mentioned in peace negotiations between Israel and Arab states.

On that point, he added, there is consensus between Israelis and Americans.

Shamir said the Americans were awaiting responses and clarifications from Jordan and Palestinian elements to a US proposal for a Middle East Peace conference pushed by Secretary of State James Baker during a regional tour last week after Syrian acceptance of the US plan.

It calls for a conference which would be able to reconvene, and at which a UN observer would be present details are still secret however.

Shamir said Israel was awaiting word from the United States on the responses and clarification of positions.

A report from Nicosia adds: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat on Wednesday charged that U.S. peace efforts were a "plot" as Syria, the key Arab backer of the initiative, called for an early peace conference with Israel.

Arafat accused Israel of engaging in a "two-track plot" with the United States to usurp Palestinian rights and said the Palestine Liberation Organisation was not "concerned" by the peace initiative launched by the United States.

In Damascus, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Shara said he hoped a peace conference would be held as soon as possible and that Israel would soften its stance on many questions linked to the process.

"A radical change of positions toward a global and honourable peace must come from Israel before other parties," he said, according to the official Syrian news agency Sana.

The minister said Israel should quit its settlement of the occupied territories and that a "refusal to its part would clearly show the absence of Israeli intentions for a just and global peace in the region."

**Three killed in Croatian battle**

**VINKOVCI (Yugoslavia), July 25 :** Three people died and two were injured when a fight between federal army officers and Croatian national guard members broke out in this tense eastern Croatian town late on Wednesday, a local doctor said, reports AFP.

Dr Josep Dolansky of the Vinkovci Hospital said the dead were two Croatian guardsmen and a federal soldier. One of the injured was a civilian.

Vinkovci, located in a part of Croatia which is home to a large Serbian minority, was one of the flash-points in violence which left at least 20 people dead in eastern Croatia on Monday.

Wednesday's clash occurred in a cafe not far from the city's army barracks, when a brawl between patrons turned into a shootout. Dr. Dolansky said that none of the victims had been in uniform at the time.



**One killed as thousands defy ban on rally in Madagascar**

**ANTANANARIVO, July 24 :** One person was reported killed as tens of thousands of demonstrators defied a ban on public gatherings and converged today on a central square a day after a state of emergency was declared in and around Madagascar's capital, reports AFP.

The government newspaper Le Journal De Madagascar said a paramilitary policeman was killed Tuesday during clashes in front of the capital's radio station, where opposition supporters had gathered.

But a spokesman for the Red Cross, which has been involved in first aid work in recent weeks since mass anti-government rallies began, said the organisation had evacuated the Gendarme but had no knowledge of his death.

The Red Cross said 13 people were slightly hurt in Tuesday's incidents.

Witnesses said no troops were present in May 13 Square today, but about 50 soldiers took up position outside the Communication and Culture Ministry, which the opposition took over on Tuesday and has been using as its headquarters.

Opposition leaders were meeting inside and were to go later to May 13 Square, a spokesman said.

"We are going to ask the population to come with us and take over the (national) radio," said the opposition's shadow minister for communications Honore Ruzafindrindra.

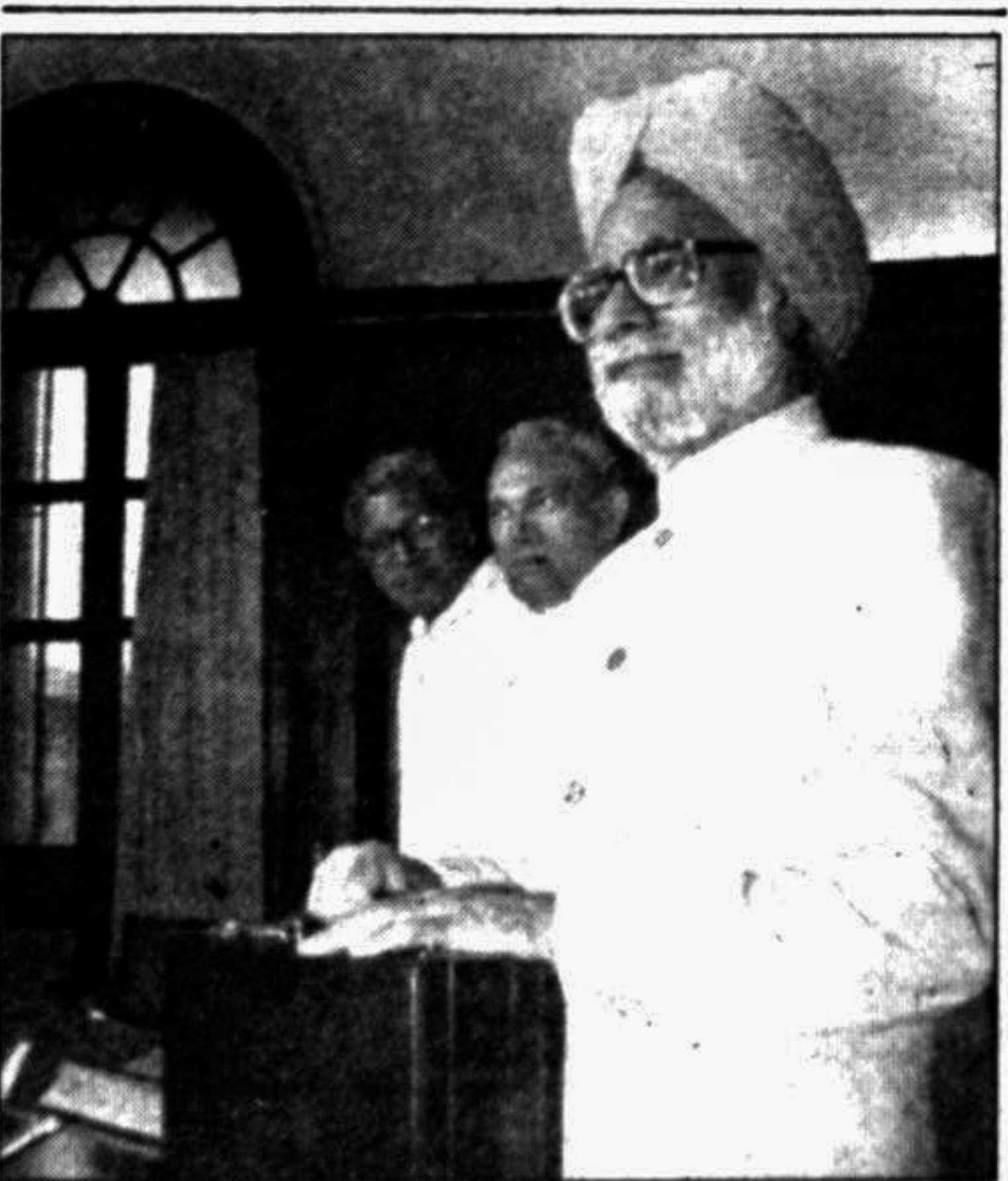
**Iraq's Baath Party to hold elections soon**

**BAGHDAD, July 25 :** Iraq's ruling Baath Party will hold elections soon for the Revolutionary Command Council, the country's supreme governing body, the Iraqi weekly Alif-ba reported Wednesday, reports AFP.

Quoting Iraqi parliamentary Speaker Saadi Mehdi Saleh, the review said that the new members of the Revolutionary Command Council "will be elected by a secret direct ballot."

Mr Mehdi Saleh added that the new council could include both current members and additions.

The 17-member body is chaired by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.



**NEW DELHI :** Finance Minister Dr Manmohan Singh holds briefcase while talking briefly to reporters Wednesday at his office in the Indian capital moments before heading to parliament where the Congress-I minority government is slated to unveil its much anticipated and controversial budget.

**Off the Record**

**Tourists can curb slaughter of turtles**

**JAKARTA: Indonesia:** attacked for allowing the mass slaughter of turtles in its tropical waters, said it was committed to their protection, reports Reuter.

The environmental group Greenpeace says Indonesia's slaughter of endangered sea turtles would be greatly reduced if Western tourists stopped buying souvenir shells and jewellery.

"If tourists stopped buying tomorrow it could have a huge impact," the groups Sea Turtle Campaigner, Trevor Daly, said in Sydney earlier yesterday at the launch of a worldwide campaign to stop the killings.

Two million tourists, mostly from Australia, Japan, North America, Britain and Germany visit Indonesia every year and spend millions of dollars on turtle products, Daly said.

Turtles, six species of which live around Indonesia, are killed in the resort island of Bali for religious ceremonies and for souvenirs made from the shells.

"We will farm protected and unprotected turtles. The protected turtles will be left in the sea and unprotected ones will be developed for consumption by the Balinese and for handicrafts," Indonesian Environment Minister Emil Salim said.

Greenpeace estimated 50,000 green and hawksbill turtles — protected under international trade agreements — were slaughtered every year in Indonesia for their meat, shells and eggs, about half on Bali.

Stuffed turtles, their shells polished to a high gloss, are openly sold in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, and other parts of the country.

Despite a decree in Bali last year to protect turtles, the number slaughtered has not declined, Greenpeace said.

Indonesia joined the International convention banning trade in the products of endangered species in 1979.

"But demand for hawksbill shells in consumer countries, particularly Japan, has ensured that significant quantities continued to be exported to foreign markets in breach of the convention," Daly said.

Japan, the biggest importer of turtle products, last month agreed to stop the import of the endangered hawksbill turtle from 1993.

Australian customs officials confiscated more than 1,000 turtle shells and items of jewellery in 1990, many taken from tourists who did not know they were breaking the law, a customs spokesman said.

"We will do our best for the turtle," Salim said. "We will hold a meeting on July 23 between government departments to work out a programme on how to conserve turtles."



**Greenpeace worker Daria O'Neill, launching international Greenpeace campaign to stop the mass slaughter of sea turtles, displays shells confiscated from tourists by Australian customs.**

**Court orders 7 to cultivate filial piety**

**FRASCATI (Italy):** A town judge has ordered seven brothers and sisters to take turns caring for their 85-year-old mother so she won't be abandoned, according to news reports Wednesday, reports AP.

The Corriere della Sera newspaper said Maria Gatta was left on a Frascati street earlier this month by a daughter who had taken care of her for an unspecified length of time.

Feuding brothers and sisters could not agree on who should care for their mother, so the youngest daughter, Riccarda Gatta, sought the help of a judge in this wine-making Roman hilltown, the newspaper said.

Judge Franco Quaranta established an order of rotating turns to begin Aug 3, the newspaper reported.

August, when a good deal of Italy shuts down for vacation, is a traditionally difficult month for many elderly.

In the past, hospital officials have accused some Italians of having their elderly parents admitted when they weren't really ill so that the families could leave town for summer vacations at the seashore or in the mountains.

**A hymn as punishment**

**GEORGETOWN (Guyana):** Because of his name, a government worker named Ray Charles was ordered to sing a hymn as punishment for an assault conviction, reports AP.

The Starobek News reported Wednesday that Magistrate K Juman-Yasin gave Charles the option on Tuesday of singing or facing other punishment for injuring a co-worker in a scuffle last week.

After conferring with his two co-defendants, the 26-year-old employee of the state-run electricity company belted out an off-key rendition of "In the Name of Jesus We Have Victory."

He received a standing ovation from court spectators and gave an encore.

The magistrate then discharged him with a reprimand.

The city magistrate had told the defendant that Charles ought to have some singing talent because he bears the same name as American rhythm and blues singer Ray Charles.

Charles said he had merely tried to break up a fight between two co-workers after one accused the other of stealing a watch.

After Charles' impromptu performance, the defendants returned to work at the Guyana Electricity Corp.

**US happy over Asean openness**

**Burma's junta blatantly ignores people's voice, says Baker**

**KUALA LUMPUR, July 25 :** US Secretary of State James Baker told southeast Asian allies today he was pleased with the region's growing political openness, but dismayed by Burma's lack of democracy, reports Reuter.

"We applaud trends towards political openness in Southeast Asia," Baker told Foreign Ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

"We view with dismay the situation in Burma, where a self-appointed military leadership regularly violates basic human rights and has blatantly ignored the people's voice as clearly expressed in popular elections."

Western nations have been pressing ASEAN — Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand — to exert pressure on neighbouring Burma, where the military government has refused to surrender power to opposition politicians democratically elected a year ago.

Burma has closed itself from "the society of nations by its political brutality and economic disintegration," said Baker, attending an annual meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers and their main trading partners.

ASEAN officials have rejected calls to exert pressure on Burma, saying they preferred to persuade the governments rather than isolate it.

The United States, which decided on Monday not to renew a textile accord with Burma, has warned Burma could destabilise the region and was a source of illicit drugs.

Parts of Burma, Laos and Thailand make up the "golden triangle," the source of much of the world's opium. Heroin is derived from opium.

The United States and the European Community have imposed an arms embargo on Burma.

Baker said the trend toward more political openness in the rest of the region was caused partly by rapid economic growth in southeast Asia.

"The region's dramatic economic growth is closely linked to the signs of political opening," he told the closed — door session. "When people gain economic freedom, they hunger as well for increased political freedom."

ASEAN ends its three-day meeting with trading partners Canada, the United States, the European Community, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea today.

**3 Sikhs jailed in Britain**

**LONDON, July 25 :** A British court jailed three Sikh militants on Wednesday for between 10 and 15 years each for plotting to kill moderate Sikh leaders in Britain, reports Reuter.

Businesswoman Gursharn Sarkaria, identified as the driving force of the group, was sentenced to 15 years at London's old Bailey court for conspiracy to murder. Co-conspirators Suptal Binje, Andparmjit Sidhu were jailed for 10 and 11 years.

The three had a hit list of six prominent Sikhs they wanted to kill for opposing the militant movement. But their plans were uncovered when police were tipped off they were seeking Semtex explosives and weapons for the killings.