

## 26 on trial in death of Gandhi



**RAJIV GANDHI:** Indian prime minister assassinated in 1991 bombing.

MADRAS, India (AP) — Sixteen Sri Lankans and 10 Indians went on trial yesterday on charges of plotting the assassination of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.

The trial is expected to last more than a year. Prosecutors listed 1,014 witnesses and submitted thousands of pages of documents. The proceedings, held in a high security courtroom near the southern city of Madras, are closed to the public and media to protect witnesses from retaliation.

The defendants were indicted two months ago and pleaded in-

nocent. The charges include conspiracy to murder, terrorist activities, using explosives and forging passports.

Twelve other suspected accomplices were killed by police or committed suicide before they could be captured.

Gandhi, who was defeated in a 1989 election, was killed at a May, 1991, re-election campaign rally in Sriperumbudur, 55 kilometres (35 miles) from Madras. A woman who authorities identified as a Tamil from Sri Lanka set off plastic explosives strapped to her waist, killing Gandhi, herself, and 16 others.