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Astronomers catch black holes firing gas bullets

Washington: Astronomers claim to have identified the moment when a black hole in our galaxy launched super-fast knots of gas into space.

Racing outward at about one-quarter the speed of light, these 'bullets' of ionized gas are thought to arise from a region located just outside the black hole's event horizon, the point beyond which nothing can escape.

"Like a referee at a sports game, we essentially rewound the footage on the bullets' progress, pinpointing when they were launched," said Gregory Sivakoff of University of Alberta in Canada, who led a team which used observations from Nasa's Rossi X-ray Timing Explorer satellite. The research centred on the mid-2009 outburst of a binary system known as H1743-322, located about 28,000 light-years away toward the constellation Scorpius. PTI

FAT BOY: A picture released by the European Southern Observatory shows a newly discovered galaxy cluster that has been nicknamed El Gordo — the 'big' or 'fat one' in Spanish. It consists of two separate galaxy subclusters colliding at several million kilometres per hour, and is so far away that its light has travelled for seven billion years to reach the Earth