

## Sonia to visit Rae Bareilly on Tuesday

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA, New Delhi

Congress President Sonia Gandhi, who resigned as member of Lok Sabha on the 'office-of-profit' issue on March 23, will visit her Rae Bareilly constituency on March 28 as a prelude to her seeking re-election from there in the by-election forced by her resignation.

Party sources said on Saturday that she would attend a few public meetings during the one-day tour.

Sources said there has been steady flow of party workers from her constituency to the Capital ever since they heard the news of her resigning from the membership of the Lok Sabha and also the Chairmanship of the National Advisory Council to pre-empt a possible disqualification for holding an office of profit as NAC chairperson.

"An early visit of Mrs Gandhi to meet party workers and her electorate in the constituency will stop further flow of workers to Delhi," sources pointed out.

Meanwhile, the Congress party has begun a serious discussion on bringing forward a legislation to define what constitute an 'office of profit'.

## Maoists kill 13 in landmine attack in India

AFP, New Delhi

At least 13 civilians were killed when Maoist rebels blew up their vehicle with a landmine, mistaking it to be a police jeep in eastern India, police said yesterday.

"The incident happened late Friday night when people were returning from a market. At least six civilians have died and four are injured," a police superintendent, who did not wish to be named, told AFP by phone from Raipur, capital of Chattisgarh state.

"The rebels attacked the vehicle thinking it was a police jeep," he said.

The official said there could be more casualties as police were still investigating the attack in Kanker district, about 135 kilometres (85 miles) from Raipur.

## Excess sleep too can make you diabetic

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New York

Men who sleep too much or too little could be at an increasing risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, says a study.

Researchers at New England Research Institutes and Yale School of Medicine studied 1,709 men between 40 and 70 years of age and found six to eight hours of sleep to be most healthy, reported science portal EurekAlert.

In contrast, men who reported they slept between five and six hours per night were twice as likely to develop diabetes and men who slept more than eight hours per night were three times as likely to develop diabetes, lead researcher H Klar Yaggi said.

Previous studies have shown similar results in women. "These elevated risks remained after adjustment for age, hypertension, smoking status, self-rated health status and education," Yaggi said.

# US, Iran to talk Iraq

## Rice says in acceptance of Tehran's offer

REUTERS, Baghdad

The United States will talk to Iran about Washington's accusations of Iranian destabilisation of Iraq, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Friday in the first public acceptance of an Iranian offer to meet.

Iran, responding to an overture by Washington last November, said last week it was open to talks on the issue with the American ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, but until Rice's comments US officials had given no firm reply.

"I'm quite certain that at some point they will meet," Rice told a Washington news conference, referring to the planned talks. She added that they would be "at an appropriate time."

Washington has charged Tehran

with meddling in the sectarian strife in Iraq, an accusation denied by Iran, which blames the US-led forces that invaded in 2003.

While US talks with Iran are unusual because the two countries have no diplomatic ties, Rice noted Khalilzad -- in his former role as US envoy to Afghanistan -- had held meetings with Iranian officials about that country.

Analysts say both the United States and Tehran are worried about worsening violence in Iraq, pushing them to agree to talks. Iraqi political sources have said they expected Khalilzad to meet Iran's representatives this week. Iran has not announced its team.

Khalilzad has renewed accusations Iran is backing Shia violence in Iraq. Some analysts say Tehran is using Iraq to deflect US pressure on

Iran over its nuclear programme.

"Training and supplying, direct or indirect, takes place, and that there is also provision of financial resources to people, to militias, and that there is presence of people associated with Revolutionary Guard and with MOIS (Iranian intelligence)," Khalilzad told the Washington Post.

He said he was particularly concerned about the Mehdi Army militia of Iranian-backed cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, and said the political parties had to do more to curb their armed supporters.

Rice's confirmation of talks with Iran on neighbouring Iraq came as Iraqi leaders held their first formal talks in several days, with Washington keeping up pressure on them to form a national unity government.

## World Social Forum opens in Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

More than 15,000 activists gathered late on Friday to open the World Social Forum, where anti-globalisation and peace and security issues will be discussed over the next six days.

Delegates from 50 countries attended the opening session chaired by Indian MP Kumari Nirmala Deshpande and watched a cultural show by Pakistani performers, organisers said.

"We want peace and justice in the world, we are against war," Brazilian delegate, Moema Miranda, told the gathering.

"We can achieve this by uniting ourselves and the World Social Forum must move on," she added.

The World Social Forum was established in 2001 as a counterpart to Switzerland's World Economic Forum of political and business leaders.

# Thousands in US protest planned crackdown on illegal immigrants

AFP, Phoenix

Up to 20,000 protesters marched through the southwestern US city of Phoenix on Friday in an explosion of Hispanic opposition to plans for a draconian crackdown on illegal immigrants.

Police said that 15,000 to 20,000 people took part in the Phoenix demonstration, as more than 2,000 high school students staged a classroom walk-out in Los Angeles and Latinos in the southern city of Atlanta rallied and boycotted businesses to protest plans for a legislative assault on immigration.

Fresh protests are scheduled to take place across the country in the coming days, including one in Los Angeles on Saturday that organizers claim will attract hundreds of thousands of people.

Friday's march in the Arizona capital of Phoenix paralysed the city and surprised authorities, who had expected only about 2,500 protesters against the immigration reform bill to be debated in the US Senate next week.

Opponents have branded the legislation inhumane, unfair and discriminatory.

"It's racist. The origins of this country are based on immigration. They (immigrants) are looking for a better way of life and to work hard and are a very good benefit to this country," said Mexican immigrant Daniel Ravella, a 42-year-old who has lived legally in the United States for four years.

"I don't agree with the way the immigration law is being passed through the Senate," he told AFP as he marched with his wife and two children.

People clogged the city streets as far as the eye could see, as police



PHOTO: AFP

A group of supporters of the rights of immigrants demonstrate near the offices of Republican Senator John Kyl, co-sponsor of the bill, in Tucson Arizona on Friday. "The Border Action Network" is an organisation that protects human and civil rights and the Sonoran desert along the Arizona-Mexico border.

on horses, bicycles and in cars scrambled to control the much larger than expected crowd of angry protesters.

The largely Latino demonstrators, waving US and Mexican flags, chanted and brandished banners and placards with slogans such as "We are not criminals, we are human."

"We march today because we are immigrants, we work hard and we love the USA," said illegal immigrant Carlos Diaz, 25, who has lived

in Phoenix for the past five years.

"We are a part of the US. We want amnesty. We want to be residents," he told AFP.

In a possible sign of things to come, one banner unfurled by protesters read: "We are a lot, we will be more."

Some 35 million Hispanics, many of them from Mexico, live in the United States and form the basis of the human machinery that keeps the major cities humming.

Latinos who have gained US

citizenship form an increasingly important part of the US electorate and make up 12.5 percent of the total population.

The immigration reform bill to be debated next week, House Resolution 4437, targets illegal immigrants, who number some 11.5 million, according to the Pew Hispanic Centre, and account for 24 percent of farm workers, 17 percent of cleaners and 14 percent of construction workers.

## TERROR ATTACK FEAR Govt asks BJP to use armoured 'chariots'

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian government has advised Hindu nationalist leaders to use armoured vehicles during their electoral rallies next month as a precaution against terror attacks, officials said.

The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) dresses up vehicles as chariots resembling battle carriages of Hindu gods as part of its revivalist campaign to garner Hindu votes ahead of elections.

The home ministry said the BJP must take precautions before leaving on their inter-city electoral drives on April 6, the Press Trust of India said on Friday.

"Both rallies would be attractive

targets for militant and terrorist groups," it quoted a classified advisory to the BJP as saying.

"They would be also passing through areas affected by Maoist insurgencies," it said, adding the BJP has been asked to bullet-proof the "chariots" which will be used by party leaders.

India's National Security Advisor M. K. Narayanan has warned that New Delhi had "specific intelligence about threats" to BJP supremo L.K. Advani during his pre-poll rally in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

The BJP and the ruling Congress party are bracing for elections next month in five states including Marxist-ruled West Bengal and insurgency-torn Assam.

## Hundreds of Maoists storm Orissa jail Kill 4, free inmates

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Bhubaneswar

In a daring replay of a raid in Bihar, hundreds of Maoist rebels on Friday stormed a jail in Orissa and freed about 40 prisoners after launching attacks on several police and government facilities that left four people dead.

The rebels took two senior police officials hostage during the audacious attack that was reminiscent of the storming of a jail at Jehanabad town in Bihar in November last year, during which the Maoists freed over 300 prisoners.

At about 5 am on Friday, nearly 200 armed guerrillas and many of their supporters entered the R. Udayagiri town in the southern

district of Gajapati, 60 km from the district headquarter of Paralakhemundi, state police chief Suchit Das said.

The Maoists, including some women guerrillas, cut telephone lines to the small town and simultaneously attacked the local police station, a camp of the reserve armed police, a government treasury and the sub-jail. The rebels looted some weapons from the police station.

Three policemen were among the dead, while RK Mallik, sub-inspector of the police station, and Rabinarayan Sethi, the jail chief, were taken hostage by the Maoists who freed 40 prisoners including their associates.

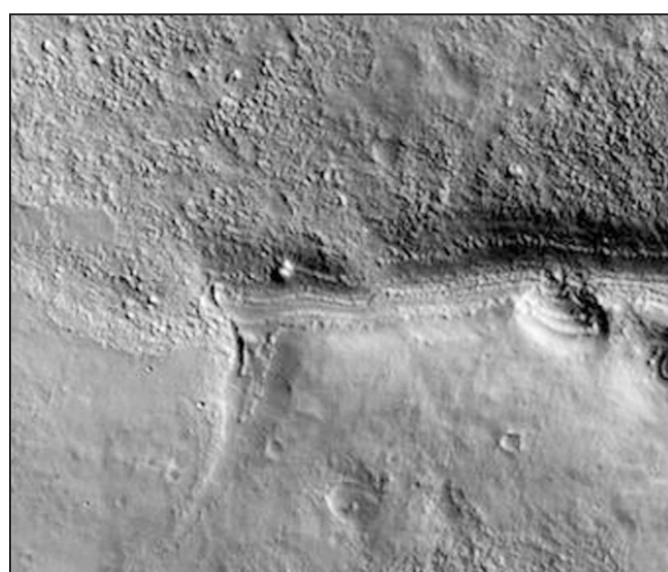


PHOTO: AP

This photo released on Friday by NASA shows a full-resolution portion of the first image of Mars taken by the High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment camera (HiRISE) on NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. The image is of an area in Mars' mid-latitude southern highlands.

## New Mars probe sends back view from orbit

AP, Los Angeles

A high-resolution camera aboard Nasa's latest spacecraft to reach Mars sent back its first view of the Red Planet from orbit, the space agency said Friday.

The crisp test image from the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter was taken late Thursday at an altitude of 1,547 miles and shows a 30.9-mile-by-11.7-mile area of the planet's mid-latitude southern highlands. The mosaic of 10 side-by-side exposures shows a cratered surface with ravine- or canyon-like channels on both sides.

Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory said the smallest discernible objects are about 25 feet across, but that the

camera will be able to capture images of objects less than three feet across once it reaches its much lower "mapping orbit."

The quality bodes well for future pictures, said Alfred McEwen of the University of Arizona, principal investigator for the High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment camera.

"The performance of the spacecraft looks superb, there's certainly no obvious smear here," he said in a telephone interview. "They have pointed us and oriented us just right to get unsmudged images."

The spacecraft reached Mars on March 10 and went into a giant elliptical orbit. Over a period of months it will dip into the upper

atmosphere in a process called aerobraking to reach altitudes between about 199 miles and 158 miles and to make its orbit more circular. The science phase of the \$720 million mission should begin in November.

The first image is comparable in resolution to those from the Mars Orbiter Camera aboard the Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft, which has been orbiting the Red Planet since 1997, McEwen said.

The main purpose of the initial image was to calibrate the camera. Two other cameras on the orbiter, the Context Camera and the Mars Color Imager, were also tested Thursday night during a 40-minute collection of engineering data.