

Security tight for Rahul Gandhi's Chhattisgarh tour

Security is very tight all along Congress MP Rahul Gandhi's route during his two-day visit to Chhattisgarh's tribal belt, with camouflaged patrol vehicles scouting the roads and policemen moving around in mufti to thwart any possible attacks by Maoists.

'The patrolling is on but the vehicles are camouflaged. Police are using private vehicles and civil dress to patrol,' said Superintendent of Police (telecommunications) S.K. Dwivedi in Kanker.

Security for the Congress general secretary was beefed up Saturday after an alleged Maoist attack in Dantewada on Friday when they set fire to around 50 vehicles belonging to the Essar group.

'Yes, security has been tightened after the burning of vehicles by Naxals (Maoists),' Pawan Deo, DIG, Kanker told IANS.

The tribal belt of Chhattisgarh bordering Madhya Pradesh is a hotbed of Maoist activity. Gandhi's wish to visit Dantewada was earlier turned down by the state government, which felt it could not provide adequate protection to him.

Sources said even the elite Special Protection Group (SPG) was taking extra precautions.

During Gandhi's visit to Konda village and then Antaagarh area near Jagadalpur Saturday afternoon the SPG did not allow the press corps to enter the tribal belt along with the Congress leader, though they had valid passes.

The SPG also conducted mock drills several times to make the 100-metre journey of Gandhi from the helipad to the school building safe. He is to hold a meeting with the youth wing of the Congress later.

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