

## EARTH CALLING MARS

# Sounding out the Red planet

### Mars rover sends back human voice recording

**LOS ANGELES:** The first recorded human voice that travelled from Earth to Mars and then back to Earth was released on Monday at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California.

The voice playback was released along with new telephoto camera views of the varied Martian landscape during a news conference at JPL.

In spoken words radioed to the Mars rover Curiosity and then back to NASA's Deep Space Network (DSN) on Earth, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden congratulated NASA employees and the agency's commercial and government partners on the successful landing of Curiosity earlier this month, reported Xinhua.

"Curiosity will bring benefits to Earth and inspire a new generation of scientists and explorers, as it prepares the way for a human mission in the not too distant future," said Mr. Bolden in the recorded message. The telephoto images beamed back to

Earth show a scene of eroded knobs and gulches on a mountainside, with geological layering clearly exposed.

The new views were taken by the 100-mm telephoto lens and the 34-mm wide-angle lens of the Mast Camera (Mastcam) instrument.

Mastcam has photographed the lower slope of the nearby mountain called Mount Sharp, according to JPL.

"Those layers are our ultimate objective. The dark dune field is between us and those layers. This is a very rich geological site to look at and eventually to drive through," said Mastcam principal investigator Michael Malin.

A drive early Monday placed Curiosity directly over a patch where one of the spacecraft's landing engines scoured away a few inches of gravelly soil and exposed underlying rock.

Researchers plan to use a neutron-shooting instrument to check for water molecules bound to minerals at this partially excavated target, JPL said. Curiosity already is returning more data from the Martian surface than have all of NASA's earlier rovers combined, according to JPL. — IANS



*An image taken by the Curiosity rover on August 23 shows Mount Sharp in the background. — PHOTO: AFP*