

Actor Urmila Matondkar, Congress' Mumbai North candidate, prepares for her 'new role'

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From an actor to being called 'Aapli Mumbaichi Mulgi', Congress' star candidate from Mumbai North Lok Sabha constituency, Urmila Matondkar has come a long way. Less than a month after her candidature was announced, Matondkar has been campaigning fiercely to garner support from people. At a rally held in Malad west on Thursday, a huge crowd was waiting in anticipation to catch a glimpse of the star. "We are here to see her not just as an actor, but as a strong woman who seems to be giving a tough fight in the elections. Over the past few days, she has been constantly travelling across the constituency, meeting different people and has attempted to reach out to all, which is a good sign," said Shobhana Kedia, a local resident. As the rally begins, the announcer appeals to people: "Tai mai akka vichar kara pakka, hatala mara shikka!



(Sisters and mothers, take a firm stand and vote for the hand)." As she travels through the inroads of slums, residents come out of their homes and wave out to Matondkar. She is pitted against BJP's sitting MP Gopal Shetty, who had won the 2014 elections against Congress' Sanjay Nirupam by more than 4 lakh votes. It was considered a tough constituency for the Congress and none of its city

leaders were keen to contest from here. As such, Matondkar was fielded. In the past couple of weeks, she has created a buzz with her campaign. Several BJP supporters have been seen at her rallies, as they chant 'Modi Modi' to show their loyalty towards the party. The actor, however, said it does not affect her anymore. "I am here to do good work and am humbled to get the love and support of many from

the constituency. The crowds that you see today are only a part of the huge backing that I have from people," she tells HT. "Many are hopeful about my win and call me to discuss their issues." The actor campaigns in two to three slots every day, with just small breaks in between. "Unlike Govinda, who won from the constituency but never came back here, she shows commitment," said Mahendra Tembe, 52, a Malad resident.

Hardik Patel slapped at poll rally in Gujarat

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Congress leader Hardik Patel was slapped by an unidentified man while addressing a poll rally on Friday in a village in Gujarat's Surendranagar district. The incident was captured on cameras of news channels covering the rally in the district, around 130 km from here. As soon as Hardik Patel started

his speech at Baldana village under Wadhwan taluka, a man suddenly came on the stage and slapped him. The man, who looked angry and was seen saying something to Hardik Patel after slapping him, was overpowered by Congress workers, who also beat him up and took him away from the venue. The unidentified man was later handed over to the police.

Congress candidate for the Surendranagar Lok Sabha seat, Soma Patel, was present on the dais when Hardik Patel was assaulted. According to Surendranagar SP, Mahendra Bagadia, the man is yet to be identified. "We are yet to investigate who the man was and why he slapped Hardik. No one has lodged a complaint with us yet. We are investigating the matter," said Bagadia.

Priyanka Chaturvedi quits Congress, Shiv Sena says she will join them

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Priyanka Chaturvedi, who quit the Congress, is set to join the Shiv Sena, party spokesperson Sanjay Raut said. Chaturvedi had been unhappy with the Congress after the party reinstated partymen she had accused of "misbehaving" with her. She sent her resignation to Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday. She was the Congress national spokesperson and convenor of party's media cell. Chaturvedi had recently publicly criticised the party's decision to reinstate partymen, she had accused of "misbehaving" with her during a press conference in Mathura last year. The Uttar Pradesh Congress had suspended some party workers following her complaint. They were recently reinstated, reportedly on the recommendation of Jyotiraditya Scindia, the Congress in-charge of UP

West. On Wednesday, Chaturvedi targeted the party leadership saying the Congress gave preference to "lumpen goons" over those who gave their "sweat and blood" to the party. "In the last few weeks certain things have convinced me that my services are not valued in the organization and that I have reached the end of the road," she wrote to Gandhi "with a heavy heart." "A serious incident and misbehaviour against me by certain party members while I was on official duty for the party has been ignored under the guise of all hands needed for elections. This indignity to me has been the final factor to convince me to move on focus on other things outside INC," her letter reads. Chaturvedi took to Twitter to denounce the move

saying, "Deeply saddened that lumpen goons get preference in @incindia over those who have given their sweat and blood. Having faced brickbats and abuse across board for the party yet those who threatened me within the party getting away with not even a rap on their knuckles is unfortunate (sic)." Earlier, she changed her bio on micro-blogging site Twitter. She had dropped 'AICC Spokesperson' from her Twitter bio. Omar Abdullah, leader of the Congress's alliance partner the National Conference, said Chaturvedi was "an asset" to the Congress. "To have lost her to selfish personal interests would have been no loss but to lose her because she felt her party didn't stand up for her is all the more unfortunate. All the best going ahead Priyanka," Abdullah wrote on Twitter.

If Rahul Gandhi becomes Prime Minister, I will sit by his side: Deve Gowda

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Former prime minister Deve Gowda, 85, who is contesting from Karnataka's Tumkur parliamentary constituency, said that if Rahul Gandhi becomes the Prime Minister of the country, he will be by his side. Commenting on his son and Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy's statement that there is a possibility that Deve Gowda might become the Prime Minister as a consensus candidate, he said: "I am not bothered about this. My concern is Modi will come to Parliament. I have got the guts and conviction to tell it to the face of the PM. I have

the courage. If Rahul Gandhi becomes the Prime Minister, I will sit by his side. It is not necessary to become the Prime Minister," reports ANI. The JD(S) chief, who along with his two grandsons is contesting the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, also made it clear that he was not retiring from active politics. "I announced three years back that I will not contest elections. There are circumstances now in which I have been forced to contest. There is nothing to hide. I have no ambition of anything but what I always said is that I am not going to retire from active politics," Gowda said. When asked if he wanted to retire like Advani, he said 'no', adding, "I want to save my

party first and last the office building," ANI reported. Speaking about his commitment to the Congress, he said: "Madam Sonia Gandhi has taken the decision to support Deve Gowda even though we are a small party. Now it is my responsibility to move forward with Congress, though I do agree in some states there is no question of any coalition. But in Tamil Nadu, there is a coalition between Congress and DMK and with Sharad Pawar's party in Maharashtra." Responding to accusations of saving the family rather than the party, the JD(S) chief said: "Several leaders who worked with me collectively,

have left. Some people are in Congress, some in BJP. I was able to keep the party intact but suffered. I have not allowed my family members to become president of the party." Deve Gowda's two grandchildren Nikhil Kumar, son of chief minister HD Kumaraswamy, and Prajwal Revanna, son of public works minister HD Revanna, are contesting the general elections. While Gowda vacated his Hassan seat for Prajwal, Nikhil is in fray from neighbouring Mandya.

PM Modi to address convention of traders

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address a convention of traders at Talkatora stadium in New Delhi today. The convention has been organised by traders supporting the BJP to express gratitude for various measures promised in the party manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls. Union minister Vijay Goel said,

traders want to express their gratitude to the Prime Minister for the BJP's Sankalp Patra promising measures like accident insurance of 10 lakh rupees, pension after 60 years, traders credit card, simplification of GST and also exemption from income tax up to 5 lakh rupees. Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari claimed that only the saffron party can permanently solve the problems of traders.

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Election Commission will submit its report today to the Supreme Court on whether the ban on the biopic on Prime Minister Narendra Modi should continue. Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha said in New Delhi that the EC will submit to the Supreme Court its view on banning the film's pan-India release in a

sealed cover today. The EC, on the apex court's directions, had watched the film yesterday. The Supreme Court had on Monday directed the EC to watch the full biopic on Mr Modi and take an informed decision on banning its release. A bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna had said it will consider the EC report and hear the matter on April 22.

Campaigning gears up for 3rd phase of Lok Sabha elections

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Campaigning is gaining momentum for the third phase of Lok Sabha elections. Voting in this phase will be held in 116 constituencies, across 13 states and 2 Union Territories, on Tuesday. These include, all 26 constituencies of Gujarat, 20 in Kerala; 14 each in Maharashtra and Karnataka; 10 in Uttar Pradesh; Seven in Chhattisgarh; Six in Odisha; five each in Bihar and West Bengal; Two in Goa, One each in Jammu and Kashmir, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Tripura. Election to Tripura (East) constituency was postponed to the third phase for security reasons. BJP President Amit Shah and Congress President Rahul Gandhi are scheduled to address rallies in Gujarat today. Mr Gandhi will also hold public meetings at Raichur and Chikodi in Karnataka. In Uttar Pradesh, Samajwadi party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav and BSP Chief

Mayawati will hold a joint rally in Mainpuri. They are sharing the dias after a gap of almost 25 years. In Assam, Senior BJP leader Sarbanand Sonowal, Northeast Democratic Alliance Chairman Himanta Biswa Sarma, Congress leader and former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, state Congress President Ripun Bora are holding rallies and road show for the party candidates. Polling will be

held in Guwahati, Barpeta, Dhubri and Kokrajhar seats in the third phase. 54 candidates are in the fray. Meanwhile, filing of nominations for the fifth phase ended yesterday. 51 constituencies, spread over seven states, will go to polls on the 6th of next month. Scrutiny of nominations will be held tomorrow, with Monday being the last date for withdrawal of candidature.

137 Candidates file their nomination for 5th phase of polling in Bihar

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In Bihar, 49 candidates have filed their nominations for Lok Sabha elections on Thursday. Filing of nominations for the fifth phase of elections ended yesterday. With this, 137 candidates have filed nominations for this phase. Expelled RJD leader Ali

Ashraf Fatmi has filed his nomination as BSP candidate from Madhubani constituency. Candidates can withdraw their nomination till April 22. The fifth phase of polling will be held in five constituencies of Bihar namely Sitamarhi, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Saran and Hajipur on May 6.

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