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DR. KHARGE'S POLITICAL CAREER: FROM A STUDENT LEADER TO A SENIOR LEADER AND MEMBER OF THE

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BANGALURU, DHNS

There's no such word as retirement - Rajya Sabha

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DR. KHARGE
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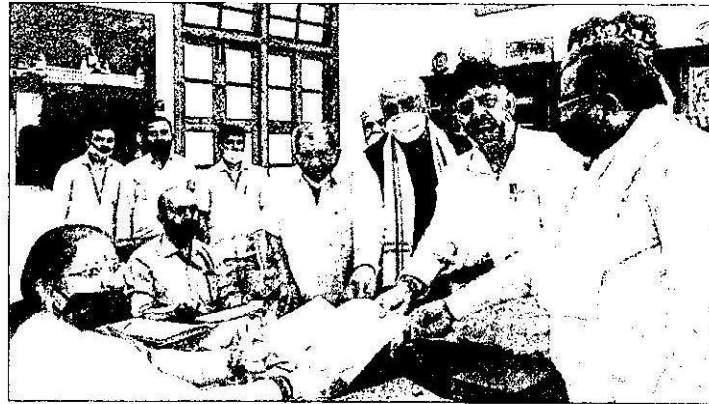
There's no such word as retirement, says Kharge ahead of RS election

BANGALURU, DHNS

Congress veteran Mallikarjun Kharge filed his nomination for the Rajya Sabha election on Monday. A nine-time MLA and two-term Lok Sabha member, Kharge was known as 'Solillada Saradara' for his undefeated poll streak that ended last year. He speaks to **Bharath Joshi** on entering the Rajya Sabha and the way forward:

Many see this as the start of a second innings in your political career.
It's not a second innings, really. I've been winning consistently for 48 years. From 1969, till now, 51 years, I've been in active politics. Even before that I was a student leader and a small trade union functionary. So, this isn't a new thing for me. It's a continuous process. There's no such word as retirement.

But we did sense some hesitation in you in being a Rajya Sabha member. Why?
Well, this is the first time this (opportunity) has come. I lost the election a year ago. Now, the party



Veteran Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge submits his nomination papers for Rajya Sabha polls in Bengaluru on Monday. Senior leader Shamanur Shivashankarappa, KPCC president D K Shivakumar and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Siddaramaiah are seen.

has chosen me after observing my work, commitment and all that. I'll try to live up to their expectations.

What role do you see yourself play in the Rajya Sabha?
That you can see only after June 19. Everyone has seen my performance as the floor leader in Lok Sabha. The north Indians used to say, "Some Madras fellow has come. How can he face the north Indian

Hindi-speaking belt, that too, with just 40-45 people." I tried my best and the leadership also backed me fully.

Former PM H D Deve Gowda and you, together in Rajya Sabha, have raised expectations for Karnataka.
Both of us will do our job. Both of us have been there (in Parliament). People have seen me here when I

was the CLP leader for six years, party president and minister. Deve Gowda worked as CM, minister and then as the PM, which was a great honour for India, especially Karnataka. He's 10 years senior to me. Politically, I'm nearing 48 and he 58. According to age, I'm completing 78 and he's 88. Wherever differences are there, they're there.

Much has been said about the lockdown and the problems that came with it. What's the one thing the Congress would have done differently to handle the situation?
Look, I don't want to criticise the government at this juncture. But the first Covid-19 case was detected on January 30 itself, isn't it? Then, February went. Then, in March you did this. A small country like Singapore gave 4-5 days time for people to settle. For a country of 130 crore, there was no thought about their food, water and jobs. It was like how demonetisation was announced. You have to admit your failures. If you had warned people in January itself, that would have prevented people walking, dying on the roads and all that. There was no forethought.