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POLITICAL NOTES I'm Not Obligated To Either Congress Or BJP, Says Former PM

Not a consensus candidate for RS, insists Deve Gowda

Priyank: Father and I got death threats

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Bengaluru: After tasting a humiliating defeat in the Lok Sabha polls last year, JD(S) supreme and former PM HD Deve Gowda said his dignity had been impacted due to his and his party's rout. He had hit out at those trying to write his political epitaph, asserting he would "rise from the dust".

THE INTERVIEW

Today, he's all set to enter Rajya Sabha for the second time, albeit with the support of Congress and BJP, which have facilitated his unanimous election by not fielding candidates against him. In an interview with **TOL**, the patriarch, however, insists he isn't a consensus candidate as being made out to be.

What is the role you are looking at nationally, especially when BJP's unprecedented rise has totally dwarfed the opposition?
This is exactly why I'm keen to go to Parliament at this age.



TIME TO COME BACK: HD Deve Gowda

Your renewed equation with Congress suggests you're keen on an alliance again. Don't you think your Rajya Sabha entry will work in favour of DK Shivakumar?
We [JD(S) and Congress] should have been united much earlier. If Congress falls short of a majority in the next assembly polls, I will offer support to the party, irrespective of whoever becomes the CM. My priority is to save my own regional party.

The BJP is taking advantage of the dwarfed strength of opposition parties and has been bulldozing several bills, which is not in the country's interest. A controversial bill like revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir was originally not a part of NDA's scheme, but an RSS agenda. (Mallikarjun) Kharge and I want to stop this kind of coercion in Rajya Sabha since BJP is still short of a majority in the house of elders.

Without numbers, can you and Kharge strengthen the

voice of opposition in Parliament?
Yes, certainly. Though BJP government handled the Covid-19 crisis quite appreciatively to start with, it totally faltered in offering relief. The financial package announced by the central government was not in conformity with the ground reality. Benefits did not reach the needy. We need a strong opposition voice to put the government on the mat and ensure justice for people.

But your election to RS will only be possible because

BJP and Congress decided not to field any candidate against you. Are you not obligated now?
No, I'm not a consensus candidate as is being made out to be and I'm not politically obligated to either BJP or the Congress. I had not asked them not to field a third candidate against me. I decided to contest the polls on a request from Sonia Gandhi as she chose not to field a candidate against me. She personally called me to say she missed me in Lok Sabha and she felt my presence in Parliament was essential under the current circumstances.

If BJP had fielded a candidate, don't you think, your MLAs would have cross-voted?
BJP has 27 surplus votes after winning two seats and it needed 18 more to ensure the victory of a third candidate. BJP leaders may have managed to get a maximum of two MLAs to vote for their candidate. Knowing this, they refrained from fielding a third one. I was ready to give a fight.

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Congress MLA from Chittapur Priyank M Kharge has complained to Karnataka police chief Praveen Sood that he and his father Mallikarjun Kharge, former leader of opposition in Lok Sabha, received threats from unidentified miscreants who called them past Sunday midnight. The miscreant then called Priyank on his mobile and then called the landline of Kharge's Sadashivanagar residence. In the letter, Priyank stated the call to the landline was made around 1.30am and his father answered it. "Speaking in Hindi and

English, the caller abused my father and threatened him with dire consequences for contesting Rajya Sabha elections. By then, I had received continuous calls from an unknown mobile number between 12.36am and 12.53am. At least 10 calls were made and I ignored them. Around 1am, I received another call from a private number which was not displayed. I answered it and the man, speaking in English and Hindi, abused me using filthy language. The miscreant threatened me as well," Priyank's complaint read. The case has been handed over to cybercrime police.

Names discussed with me: BSY

Bengaluru: Chief minister BS Yediyurappa had some damage control on Tuesday, saying the BJP central leadership had discussed with him before finalising the names of two grassroots party workers as candidates for the June 19 Rajya Sabha polls from Karnataka. "From our core committee (state) we had sent some names, but our national presi-

dent spoke to me and said it has been decided to give tickets to grassroots party workers," Yediyurappa said, dismissing reports that he had no clue about the party leadership's decision to go with the two dark horses, Eranna Kadadi and Ashok Gasti. "It is not for our state alone, the decision is applicable to other states also, I welcome it," he added. TNN