

# G-23 MEMBERS CAVE IN, BACK KHARGE IN PRESIDENTIAL POLL

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**Solid backing:** Many Congress leaders, including some from the G-23, came to offer support for Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday. PTI Manvender Vashist Lav

Two years after raising the banner of revolt against the Congress party's style of functioning, members of the G-23, or the ginger group that pushed for internal reforms, on Friday backed veteran Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, in the Congress presidential election against Lok Sabha member Shashi Tharoor, who too was a member of the G-23.

The decision to back Mr. Kharge was taken after an informal meeting between Anand Sharma, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Prithviraj Chavan and Manish Tewari late on Thursday evening and all of them became his proposers.

"Leadership, Ideological clarity, narrative & transparent access to resources are pillars of 'A' political party. Given recent unfortunate events it's time to close ranks & strengthen @INCIndia recalling wise words of @citiznmukherjee & work for a Consensus & effective Presidency," Mr. Tewari tweeted, quoting an extract from the late Pranab Mukherjee's memoirs.

In their letter to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi in August 2020, the G-23 leaders, however, had argued that the party should encourage elections at all levels instead of the high command appointing office-bearers at district level. "At least, this is a start and there is an election now for the AICC president and it will be followed up by an election to the CWC," said another member of the group.

In Mr. Kharge's nomination, the Congress seemed to have waived the condition that was set for Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, about stepping down before filing his nomination, to follow the 'one man one post' principle.

Mr. Kharge though has indicated that he would resign from the LoP's position soon as he doesn't yet occupy two posts. Digvijaya Singh and P. Chidambaram are among the front runners for his replacement, sources said.

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