

PROFILE

H D Deve Gowda: Earthy Sophisticate

by Javed M Ansari and Stephen Davd

A classic irony: most politicians, by default or premonition of destiny, spend their lives travelling on one journey to one destination, no matter how unreachable -- to be Prime Minister, the Prince of Power. All their energies are directed to that end. Which is why Deve Gowda, as he himself says, never painted, never wrote poetry, never played golf. How could he? Politics consumed him. Yet, during the fateful days before he was to become prime minister, he had not an inkling.

As he boarded the Indian Airlines flight to New Delhi on May 13, Deve Gowda's brain was working as it usually does: relentlessly. Churning out ideas, combinations, permutations, all the thinking that a man who makes kings must do. For as chief of the Karnataka Janata Dal he had emerged as one of the key regional chieftains who would help broker the next power configuration in New Delhi. Yet never once -- except in perhaps a less humble moment -- did he see himself as the King. "I left Bangalore determined to make V.P. Singh the leader," he says. "I didn't even dream this would happen."

Yet it happened. Singh played the reluctant warhorse, Jyoti Basu the restrained one; and the 64-year-old Haradanahalli Doddegowda Deve Gowda, despite the pleas of his wife Channamma not to accept a job that guaranteed headaches and little else, stepped forward. For a man who during campaigning had vowed 'never to cross the borders of Karnataka', this was a big step. But two weeks is a lifetime in politics and he now said the "responsibility" had been "thrust" upon him and "there was no question of ducking it."

made it a point to listen to everybody who came to meet me." And this is not mere talk. Says A. Krishna, a long-time friend: "As someone who has seen him grow from the early 1950s, I can tell you that what marks him out from others is the rapport he is able to strike with the people he meets." Being accessible also meant Deve Gowda would be forced to work long hours, sleeping at best no more than four or five hours a night. This did not worry him, as life for him began, and ended with politics. According to B.L. Shankar, a Janata Dal MP from Chikmagalur: "He is an over-time politician. He is either discussing politics with people around him or over the telephone."

Frivolity of any sort does not seem to have a place in Deve Gowda's scheme of things. He appears to be a man of simple habits, of consistency, who visits Tirupati frequently, who doesn't touch alcohol or meat, whose last excursion to a movie theatre was 16 years ago. Indeed, so caught up is Deve Gowda in politics that he no longer finds the time to listen to music, once a source of great relaxation for him.

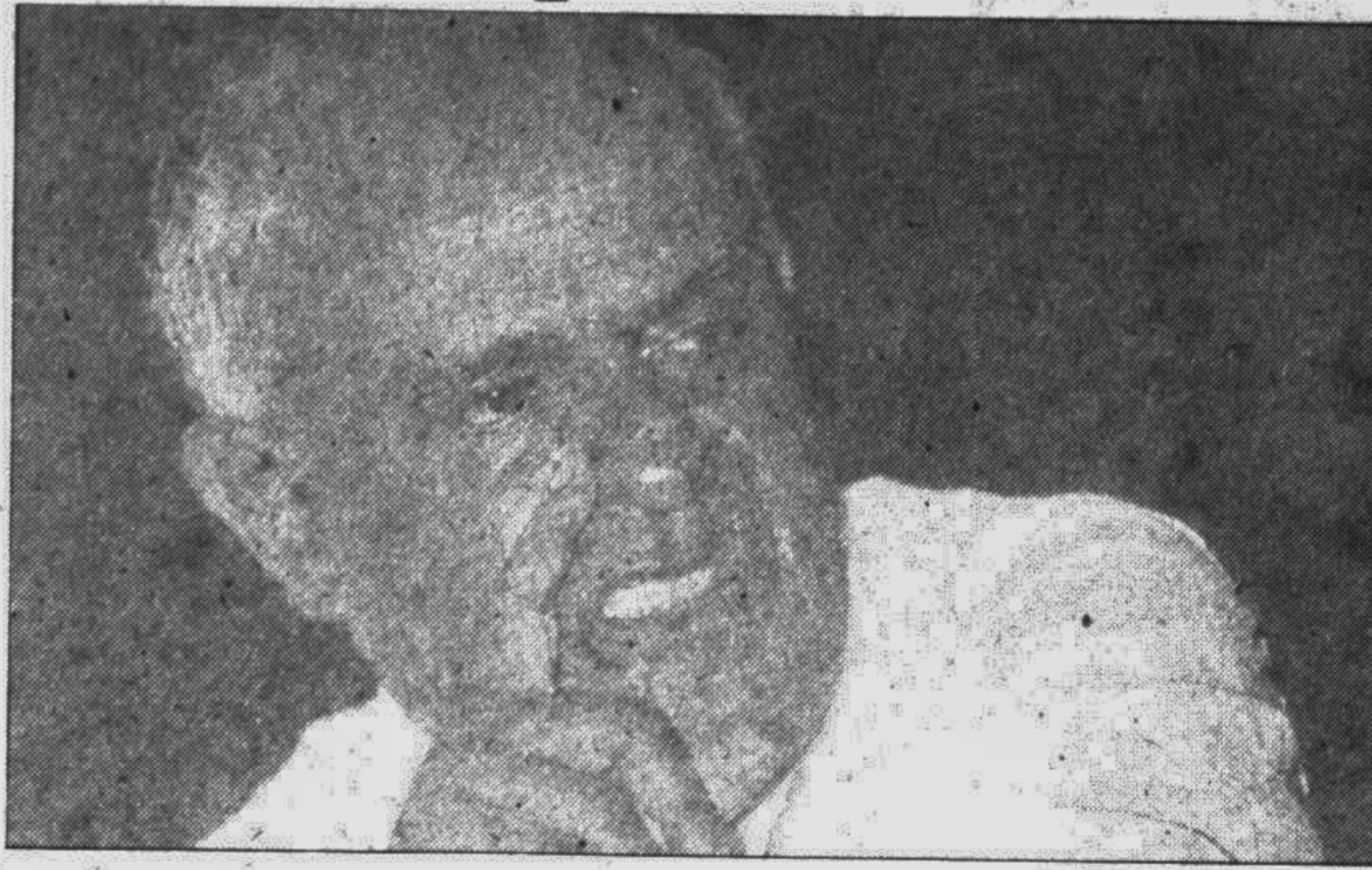
Perhaps it follows that Deve Gowda's manner is uncomplicated. He is a soft-spoken man who has abandoned aggressiveness for a more polite and humble demeanour. Some speak of a short fuse but it is a temper that dies down as fast as it rises up. In short, he is a straightforward man, and this probably accounts for his impressive rapport with leaders cutting across ideological lines -- from V.P. Singh to P.V. Narasimha Rao, from Mulayam Singh Yadav to Laloo Prasad Yadav.

But none of this means that he lacks political acumen. For instance, in a display of his savvy as chief minister in 1994, he pricked the BJP's balloon by defusing the controversy over flag-hoisting at the Idgah Maidan in Hubli by making a shrewd gesture. Along with C.M. Ibrahim, his state unit president, he persuaded Muslims to hoist the national flag at the maidan. This in effect denied the BJP an issue with which it could rouse passions.

But then, he has had his share of acrimony. Deve Gowda was branded the 'Devi Lal of Karnataka' by his critics, who accused him of 'political nepotism'. After all, two of his four sons are in politics: H.D. Revanna, an MLA from Holenarasipur and H.D. Kumaraswamy,

the newly-elected MP from Kanakapura. Deve Gowda replied that he had never masterminded the entry of his children into politics. For years Gowda was also criticised for being 'casteist', unable to look beyond the narrow concerns of his own community. Also, when he was a minister in Hedge's cabinet, he held what were considered 'lucrative' portfolios: public-works department and then irrigation. Inviting charges of corruption though none were ever proved.

Meanwhile, Deve Gowda was busy revealing a certain sophistication that those who



INTERVIEW

"Congress will not be driving us"

Amid the jubilation of his supporters at Karnataka Bhawan following the all-important call from the President inviting him to form the government, H.D. Deve Gowda managed to keep his emotions in check, aware perhaps of the magnitude of the task that lay ahead of him. Retiring for sleep at 3 a.m. after meeting the United Front (UF) leaders, he was up again a few hours later. Principal Correspondent Javed M. Ansari caught up with the prime minister and interviewed him on how he plans to tackle his new responsibilities. Excerpts:

Q. You are heading a coalition. Some of the UF constituents even contested the elections against the Janata Dal. What is it, apart from the antipathy towards the BJP, that binds you together?  
A. We may have had some differences but we share a common vision for the country. What binds us together is our commitment to secularism and the federal structure of the polity. We share a common view about the need to remove poverty and unemployment and to help the agriculture sector. We are bound by common goals of uplifting the lot of women and making the SC/STs, the minorities and the Backward Castes socially and

economically stronger.  
Q. There is a big question mark over the stability of your Government. For how long will you be able to carry along the various constituents?  
A. I don't see why people have doubts about our survival. We have the support of over 300 MPs and 75 per cent of the votes polled were in favour of the parties that are in the UF or support us. The mandate is in favour of a coalition and we have responded to that. We may have not succeeded entirely in the past but we are all aware of the dangerous situation the country is in and the disastrous consequences that await us if we fail. It's not important how long I remain

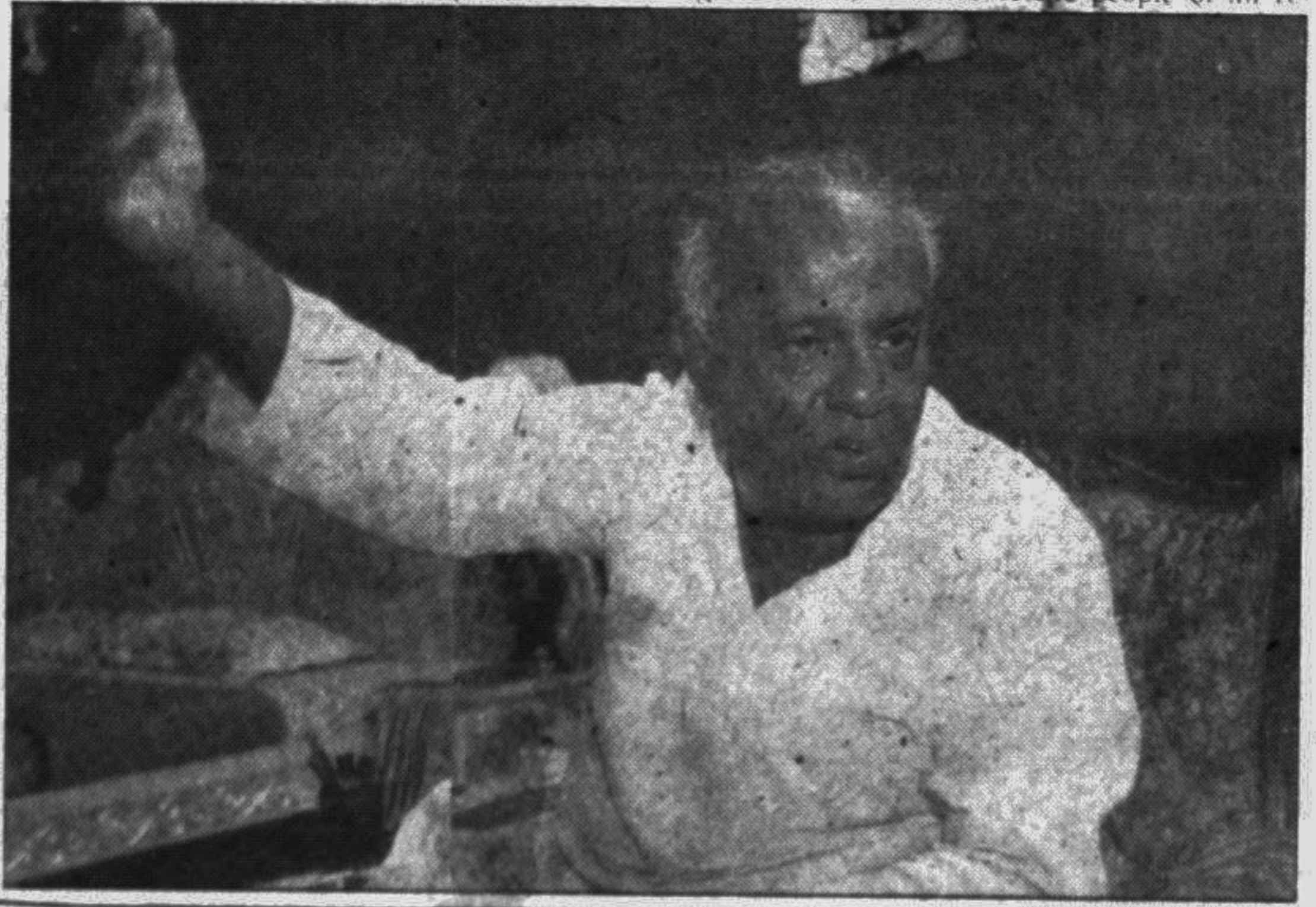
prime minister or how long my Government lasts. What is important is how we govern and what we achieve.  
Q. Won't the decision of the Left and some regional parties to stay away affect the smooth functioning of your Government?  
A. I don't think so. The left parties may or may not be in the Government but they are an integral part of the Front. The Left has been a guiding force and there is no ambiguity about their support. Likewise, the regional parties will play a constructive role in the functioning of the Government. In fact, this is the first government which is truly representative of the people of all re-

gions of the country.  
Q. But your party colleague Ramakrishna Hegde sees the UF as an 'opportunistic' alliance.  
A. It's his prerogative. Hegde is a very senior and distinguished colleague. He has his own ideas and I'm not going to join issue with him.  
Q. The Congress backing is vital to you. Therefore, will you allow it to dictate terms from the sidelines?  
A. There is no question of the Congress or anybody else driving us. I did not aspire to become the prime minister. Once all secular parties reposed confidence in me, I could not refuse. I have no fear that any of the partners in the Front or the Congress will create problems.  
Q. But doesn't accepting the support of the Congress amount to making a compromise?  
A. The mandate favoured a coalition of secular forces. So I will try and make use of the wisdom of all the supporting parties including the Congress.  
Q. In the past, the Congress has pulled down governments it had initially set up supporting. Do you have any fears that your Government will meet the same fate as that of Charan Singh and Chandra Shekhar?  
A. You must be fair to the Congress. So far, they have not put any conditions whatsoever. The CWC on its own decided to support the formation of a secular government and even wrote to the President about it. I don't want to go into why they made that decision. They took the decision even before we approached them. I have absolutely no doubt about the sincerity of the Congress party's support to the UF Government.  
Q. It seems your personal

rapport with P.V. Narasimha Rao helped you to get the support of the Congress.  
A. The support was extended to the UF. In fact, the Congress had made it clear that it would support the formation of a secular government. It had nothing to do with my relationship with Mr Rao.  
Q. Will you pursue the cases against Rao relating to St Kitts and the hawala scandal?  
A. There will be no personal

clear that almost all chief ministers, irrespective of their party ideologies, were in favour of reforms, be it in West Bengal, Rajasthan or Gujarat. A few days ago, they (the Shiv Sena-BJP Government in Maharashtra) approved the Enron deal despite all the tall claims they had made earlier. There may be some minor areas of difference but in principle, all state governments have welcomed investments. I will sit with them and try and come to some understanding.  
Q. Will you roll back reforms?  
A. No. The decisions that have been taken will be honoured. But in future when we tackle some of the pending issues, I will take everybody into confidence. That's why we have already set up a subcommittee which will work out a common approach.  
Q. Has the Congress suggested the economic line it would want you to adopt?  
A. I have not discussed anything with anybody. But any future action that my Government takes will only be done after due consultation with friendly parties. I will also take the Congress into confidence.  
Q. As chief minister, you were involved in the Cauvery dispute. Now as prime minister, you will have to decide on the issue. Won't this create a problem with the DMK which is heading the Government in Tamil Nadu and is also an ally of your government?  
A. The day I was elected leader of the UF, I made it clear that I will try my best to sort out the matter in a fair manner. I don't think it will be a problem.  
Q. The UF's whole plank is built around countering communalism. As prime minister, how do you propose to tackle this problem?  
A. There is absolutely no question of any compromise with communalism. I would like to ensure that all contentious issues are sorted out amicably.  
Q. How do you propose to deal with the trouble in Kashmir?  
A. My Government will do everything it can to solve the problem. I would like to sit down with my colleagues and all those who can come up with a solution.

What is really important is how we govern and what we achieve while we are in power and not how long we stay in government.  
or political vendetta. I have never made such deals before and I don't plan to do so now. I don't want to entangle my Government in such things.  
Q. But what if Rao is charged?  
A. The law always takes its own course and I cannot interfere with that.  
Q. You have no experience of administration at the national level. How confident are you of making a success of your prime ministership?  
A. I must admit I never expected to become the prime minister when I left Bangalore. I came to Delhi with the idea of helping my friends choose a leader. But the way things turned out, I was unable to reject the proposal made by senior leaders. Now that I have been entrusted with this responsibility, I will give it my best shot. There are a lot of senior and wise men in Parliament and I will try and make use of their wisdom and expertise. I realise my limitations. I'm not a very eloquent speaker and I have a problem with Hindi. But I also know that eloquent speeches alone cannot solve the common man's problems.  
Q. Within the UF and the Congress there are some basic differences on the economic policy. As chief minister, you were closer to what Manmohan Singh preached than what was propagated by the left parties. What policy will you follow?  
A. I want to make this point



Deve Gowda with his family.

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Thursday 20th June (All programmes are in local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programmes.)

BTV 7:00am Opening Announcement Al-Doran Programme Summary 3:10 Reception from the Geeta 3:15 Retrospect of selected programme from TV Archive 4:00 News in Bangla 4:15 Khadar Jagat: 4:45 Cartoon Film: Tom And Jerry 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 National Television School Debate 6:00 News in Bangla 6:30 Echo Para Shikha: Mass Education 7:00 The News 7:05 Jiboner Abo 7:25 Nazrul Songs 8:00 News in Bangla 8:40 E-Shaptakar Naksh 10:00 News in English 10:25 Jannabithi 10:35 Film Show: The Equalizer 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Friday's programme 11:40 Close down

CHANNEL V 7:00am Repeat VJ Sophia 8:00 Jump Start VJ Trey 10:00 Frame by Frame 12:00noon The Vibe VJ Luke 1:00 By Demand VJ Trey 2:00 Repeat VJ Sophia 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:30 By Demand VJ Trey 5:30 Music Update Tokyo 6:00 Repeat VJ Sophia 6:30 The Vibe VJ Luke 7:30 First Day First Show 8:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 9:00 Video con Flashback 9:30 Classic Huck 10:30 First Day First Show 11:00 Repeat VJ Sophia 11:30 The Ride VJ Trey 12:00 Over The Edge VJ Sophia 12:30 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 2:00 By Demand VJ Trey 3:00 Billboard US Countdown 4:30 Frame By Frame

STAR PLUS 6:30am Vajrini 7:00 Message Mutant Ninja Turtles 7:30 GI Joe 8:00 Sabar Ruder And The Star Sherids 8:30 The Adventures Of Black Beauty 9:00 Aerobics Di Syne 9:30 Nancy and The Professor 10:00 Mr Belvedere 10:30 Bart Wolf's Menus 11:00 E! Feature: Kids In The Hall 11:30 Gabrielle 12:30 Santa Barbara 1:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 2:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 3:00 Resting Stee 4:00 Bart Wolf's Menus 4:30 E! Feature: Kids In The Hall 5:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 5:30 The Adventures Of Black Beauty 6:00pm Lost In Space 7:00 Home and Away 7:30 Entertainment Tonight 8:00 MASH 8:30 21 Jump Street 9:30 The X-Files 10:30 The Bold and the Beautiful 11:00 Santa Barbara 12:00am Hard Copy 12:30 Beverly Hills 90210 1:00 The Fall Guy 2:30 Entertainment Tonight 3:00 The Oprah Winfrey Show 4:00 Hard Copy 4:30 Home and Away 5:00 The Solivans 5:30 Gabrielle

STAR Sports 7:30am The Umbra Under 21 Cup Of Toulon England vs Brazil 8:30

STAR MOVIES 7:30am Film Club Jaid Bad The

Directors Cut (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Family - Omet Victory 12 (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Future Shock: The Navigator - A Medieval Odyssey 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Classic Love Me Tender PG (Hindi Subtitles) 3:00 Comedy - Local Hero 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Classic: The Mark Of Zorro 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Western: Sergio 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 US Top Ten 9:30 Romance: Foot of Future 13 (Hindi Subtitles) 11:30 Film Club Road side prophets 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 1:30 Action Cody Bad Love 18

ZEE TV 5:30am Information (TMM) 6:00 News 6:30 Jagrut 7:00 ZED Management 7:30 ZED Networking 8:00 ZED: Nayd A To Z 8:30 Mere Ghar Ana Zindag 9:00 Ghoonta Awa 9:30 HFF 12:00 Commander 12:30 Resne Spread Ek Minute 1:00 ZED Chota Byte 1:30 Asian Sky

PTV 8:00am Thawat Aur Targama HandNaat 9:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabram 8:45 Cut Piece 9:20 Aahang & Resha 9:45 Phool Chandi 10:05 Sona Chandi (Drama Serial) 10:30 Buttons & Rustys (Eng. Film) 10:55 Mili Naigme 11:00 Khabram 11:10 Aabshaar (Music Programme) 11:55 Telo Play (Drama Serial) 12:45pm Dawakh 12:55 Qarar-e-Hakoon & Baramlah 1:15 Mujaddar (Drama Serial) 2:00 Puffier (Drama Serial) 2:45 Perspective & Health Forum 3:40 Taleem Muloomat 4:35 Aurat Aur Ganson 5:05 Home Economics 6:25 Humaray Saath 5:55 Varna 6:25 Aou Coursey 7:05 Muqabil Hai Aana 7:20 Ainaak Wala Jun 7:45 English News 8:05 Jawaan Sanget 8:45 Eendhan (Drama Serial) 9:00 Break for Headline News 10:00 Khabram and Commercial News 10:35 Mast Mast Sanyo 11:15 Urdu Feature Film & Khas Khas Khabri Close down

SONY ET 8:30am Yandon Ki Baorat 9:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 I Dream Of Jeannie 10:30 Ek Rang Lamha Mazur 11:00 Ghuave (Serial) 11:30 Cine Matinee Hindi Feature Film 2:30pm Koomat (Serial) 3:00 Zamin Asman (Serial) 3:30 Mere Message Meri Goot 4:00 Sari - Wheel of Fortune Game

DD 7 8:10am Shastriya Sanget 8:20 Binodon 8:30 Sur Sanget 9:00 Janam 9:30 Naksha 10:00 Nazrul Geeti 10:15 Lokgeet 10:30 Chuti Chuti 12:00noon ETV Programme 1:00 Nahi Ganga Daitiya (Serial) 1:00 Janam (Serial) 1:30 Bengali Movie Club Film Show 5:05 Neesh Programme 5:30 News 5:35 Saahitya Sanskriti 6:00 Path Katha 6:30 Chakra Khabar 6:55 Pathi

EL TV 8:30am Jevan Ke Rang 1:30 Mohd. Rafi Rafi Special 2:30 Nasir Hussain Special 3:30 Amitabh Bachchan Special 4:30 Dance Dance 5:30

Jevan Ke Rang 6:30 Mohd. Rafi Special 7:30 Nasir Hussain Special 8:30 Amitabh Bachchan Special 9:30 Dance Dance 10:30 The Music Show 11:00 Namaskar 11:30 Shatranj 12:00 Jugal Jodi 1:00 R D Burman Special 2:00 Party Time 3:00 Wonder Wings Amar Prem 3:30 Tarannum 4:00 Ortem Hir Thi Hir Hai 4:30 Song Yatra 5:00 Young Bazar 5:30 Tarane 6:30 Dev Anand Special 7:30 Fantasy Kal Bhi Aa Bhi 8:00 People's Club 8:30 Liberty Public De

ZEE CINEMA 8:30 Tarana 9:00 Hit Hi Fit Hi 9:30 Kotwal Saab 12:15 Off Screen 12:45 Mams Bhaab 3:30 Inke Pe Inka 4:00 Raja Aur Rank 6:45 Maalamla 9:30 Songs 10:00 Love In Smla 12:15 Box Office 12:45 Evan Doye Srimantoguru (Telugu)

Garfield by Jim Davis. A list of things I'm not going to do today! James Bond. RELAX, SWEETHEART - YOU'RE IN NO DANGER - HERE'S A HUNDRED FOR THE SCARE! ON YOUR NEXT NUMBER, I THINK THEY'D PREFER THE UNCORRECTED VERSION! THE NATIVES ARE GETTING RESTLESS OUT THERE, TIGER - LET'S GET SOME STEAM UP! RUM'S ON THE HOUSE!



Remington Steele on Star Plus at 8 pm today