

By George, JD-U not in the pink

Statesman News Service

PATNA, April 12: Is the Janata Dal-United heading for another split? Although the chief minister, Mr Nitish Kumar, dismissed such a rumour that gained ground in the political circles soon after Mr George Fernandes decided to stay away from the two-day party meet here, his explanation, as it were, suggests something could be amiss after all.

Mr Kumar gave this 'uncalled for' explanation at the concluding day conclave of the national council of the party here today without any provocation from the party leaders.

"The party will not split; instead it will strengthen in the coming days", the CM said while addressing the concluding day meeting of



Mr George Fernandes

the party's national council in the local SK Memorial Hall here today. He described Mr Fernandes as *sabke neta* (everyone's leader whom he respects too much. He said: "I will not do anything that hurts the sentiments of the grassroot workers". He was backed by the newly-elected party chief, Mr Sharad Yadav, whom he described



Mr Sharad Yadav

as a valuable leader of the party whose contribution would never be ignored.

Today was a different day altogether. While yesterday Mr Fernandes was seen paying a visit to the CM's residence and discussing party issues, today it was the turn of both Mr Kumar and Mr Yadav. Both the leaders today paid separate visits to Mr Fernandes,

who was staying at Hotel Republic since yesterday morning, and tried unsuccessfully to placate the revolting Mr Fernandes. What reportedly robbed off the peace of these two leaders were the reports that Mr Fernandes was working on a special strategy with some trusted partymen and lieutenants.

Their efforts notwithstanding, Mr Fernandes boycotted the party meeting for the second consecutive day today, although he was very much in Patna. He maintained a mysterious silence and avoided media persons. Just a few of his 'trusted' photographers were allowed to shoot his meeting session with some party leaders yesterday. He left for Delhi today without any media interaction.

THE STATESMAN

Warning signals from JD(U)

Thanks to a running feud with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, George Fernandes had long been reduced to dummy president of the Janata Dal (United). In this background, Sharad Yadav's emergence as the new helmsman of the party defeating Mr. Fernandes, was a mere formality. Yet the operation has not been quite as swift or surgical as the Nitish-Sharad duo might have wanted. With Mr. Fernandes challenging his 25-413 rout in a petition to the Election Commission, the last word is still to be said on the power struggle. For 77-year-old Mr. Fernandes, it is a humiliation that cannot be swallowed easily, considering the achievements he claimed and the posts he held in his long, if controversial, career. In his idealistic early years, the one-time rebel without a pause and leading light of the Socialist movement ran a trade union, took on Indira Gandhi, fought the Emergency, and contested and won an election from jail. Somewhere along the way, the missionary zeal was lost, and replaced by an opportunism that pushed him to sup with the enemy. It was not just that Mr. Fernandes made an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party. Or even that, as convenor of the National Democratic Alliance, he was ever on hand for troubleshooting missions. Mr. Fernandes became virtually the parivar's spokesperson; the nadir was reached when he defended in Parliament the anti-Muslim Gujarat pogrom.

Mr. Fernandes' perceived closeness to the saffron family gave him enviable clout in the Vajpayee Government. Yet the seeming ideological shift was also cause for consternation among friends. Like Mr. Fernandes, Mr. Kumar too was in the NDA. But unlike the veteran, the younger politician avoided ideological identification with the larger parivar, indeed taking care to make the right secular noises. The adroit tightrope walk paid Mr. Kumar rich dividends in Bihar, up until then witness to sharply polarised electoral battles. The new Chief Minister formed a Government with the BJP but on his terms, thus sending a signal as much to the Hindutva party as to Mr. Fernandes. Mr. Sharad Yadav's election holds a significance beyond the BJP and the JD(U). It is about erstwhile partners of the BJP distancing themselves from the party. Ram Vilas Paswan was the first to go his separate way. Unsurprisingly, he has been quick to attribute Mr. Fernandes' current plight to his "closeness" to the BJP. The principal Opposition party's biggest loss following its defeat in the 14th general election has been Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party. The Vajpayee Government's main outside prop has since announced a third front in association with the Mulayam Singh-led Samajwadi Party. So is it time for the Nitish Kumar faction of the JD(U) to head towards the third front? That would seem logical given the Bihar Chief Minister's stated secular beliefs. Yet such is the illogic of politics that the third front has been wooing Mr. Fernandes more than Mr. Kumar. A clear picture might emerge in the aftermath of the ongoing Assembly elections.

15 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Sharad Yadav elected JD(U) president

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Fernandes' supporters boycott poll

Special Correspondent

PATNA: In a day of dramatic developments, Janata Dal (United) parliamentary board chairman Sharad Yadav was on Tuesday elected party president, defeating the incumbent George Fernandes.

Supporters of Mr. Fernandes alleged that the voters' list had been rigged and many of them boycotted the election allowing Mr. Yadav to take the reins.

Mr. Yadav was declared elected as the party president with 413 votes as against the 25 polled by Mr. Fernandes. Ten votes were declared invalid and 123 registered voters did not exercise their franchise.

Mr. Fernandes arrived from New Delhi on Tuesday morning and drove straight to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's residence. After his meeting with Mr. Kumar, Mr. Fernandes drove to his hotel room. His aides said he would not attend the national council meeting.

The Sharad-Nitish faction held a meeting of the national executive, presided over by vice-president Ram Jiwan Singh, and replaced returning officer Ani Hegde with Shubash Chandr Shrivastava.

Mr. Hegde could not be contacted after he faxed a letter to Mr. Yadav on Monday night informing Mr. Yadav of his decision to postpone the election for the top post on account of shortcomings in the conduct of the poll.

Election held

When the meeting eventually started four hours behind schedule, party general secretary Shambhu Shrivastava said Mr. Hegde had exceeded his brief by postponing the election.

Supporters of Mr. Fernandes protested against the "isolation and humiliation of their leader". They charged that their names did not figure in the voters' list. They staged a walkout and boycotted the election.

12 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Janata Dal (S) expels Kumaraswamy, 39 other MLAs

Decision to topple Dharam Singh Government is "against the accepted principles of the party" *J.P. Cheluvu*

Special Correspondent

Capital on Monday.

NEW DELHI: The Janata Dal (Secular) headed by former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on Saturday suspended Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy and 39 other MLAs from the party.

The suspension would take immediate effect. Danish Ali, JD (S) secretary general and spokesman, told reporters here that the action was taken as the decision taken by the MLAs [to topple the Dharam Singh Government] was against the "accepted principles of the party." The matter will be placed before the party national executive committee, which meets in the

president as the JD (S) was "wedded to certain principles and policies and, therefore, it is not proper for me to run away from my responsibilities."

Embarrassed by the revolt by a majority of the party MLAs, the JD (S) national leadership had been contemplating disciplinary action against the erring legislators. Mr. Gowda had indicated a week ago in Bangalore that action would be initiated against the 40 MLAs. The BJP-JD (S) Government won the vote of confidence on February 9 with a tally of 138-66, a week after Mr. Kumaraswamy assumed office as Chief Minister. In his reply in the State Assembly, the Chief Minister had exuded confidence

that he would win over his father, who had opposed the alliance with the BJP on ideological grounds and due to his "commitment to secularism." Mr. Kumaraswamy said that he was not doctrinaire in his approach and declared development of the State as his credo. Both he and his father were devoted to the uplift of the poor, he stated.

The action against the 40 MLAs is likely to trigger legal complications in the light of new defection laws not providing for any split in the party but only a merger.

"It is my father's blessing"
In Bangalore, reacting to the decision to suspend him and the

legislators from the party, Mr. Kumaraswamy told *The Hindu* that he considered the disciplinary action as a "blessing of his father." "It is now evident that the charges made against Mr. Deve Gowda that he had extended support to the formation of a new government in the State is false. My father has his own political ideology and he has stood steadfastly by his ideology. I believe that at the present juncture the focus should be on development and the group of JD (S) legislators with me are also of the same opinion. I am confident of proving to my father that forming a government with the support of the BJP was in the right direction."

9006 THE HINDU

Son stubborn, Gowda quits as JD(S) chief

Even Cong Offer Of Maha Model Fails To Do The Trick

Bangalore: Failing to stop his rebel son from teaming up with the BJP to oust the Congress-led coalition government headed by N Dharam Singh, former PM H D Deve Gowda on Friday resigned as JD(s) national president.

Gowda, in a last-ditch effort, had met his son on Thursday night, but failed to convince him.

In his letter to JD(S) vice-president Bapu Kaldate, Gowda said, "It is an irony of fate that being the national president of JD(S), I have to plead my inability to maintain the unity of the party in my own state. In the circumstances, it is not befitting and fair on my part to continue as national president."

Gowda requested Kaldate to convene a meeting of the national executive committee on February 3 in New Delhi for the election of the new president. The former PM said he had been in political and public life for over four decades and "yet I have never drifted away from the ideology and philosophy of my political belief. But the political developments which I am



"What can I do," Deve Gowda seems to be asking, after failing to convince his son to change his mind

witnessing in Karnataka is most unfortunate. I am aghast and pained by these developments. I am a believer in karma. This must be the result of the karma of my previous birth".

Earlier, the Congress, in a last-ditch bid to save the government, offered the JD(S) "Maharashtra model" power-sharing formula under which the crucial home and water resources portfolios were to be conceded. Under the formula, the Congress would retain the chief ministership and allot home and water resources

to the JD(S) in exchange for revenue and industries held by the latter.

Meanwhile, Kumaraswamy, who was declared the JD(S) legislature party leader by the speaker on Friday, has issued a whip to his MLAs to vote against the Dharam Singh government. However, Gowda has not issued any instructions to the MLAs supporting him. Political observers said it would mean that the JD(S) would not go the whole hog to save its coalition government with the Congress. Agencies

20 JAN 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Gowda sons on the rise in JD(S)

Ex-PM using different yardstick for Kumaraswamy, says Siddaramaiah

B.R. Srikanth
Bangalore, January 19

ON HIS debut in electoral politics in 1996, H.D. Kumaraswamy had to fend off questions on how he could play an ODI (One Day International) without even the experience of First Division cricket.

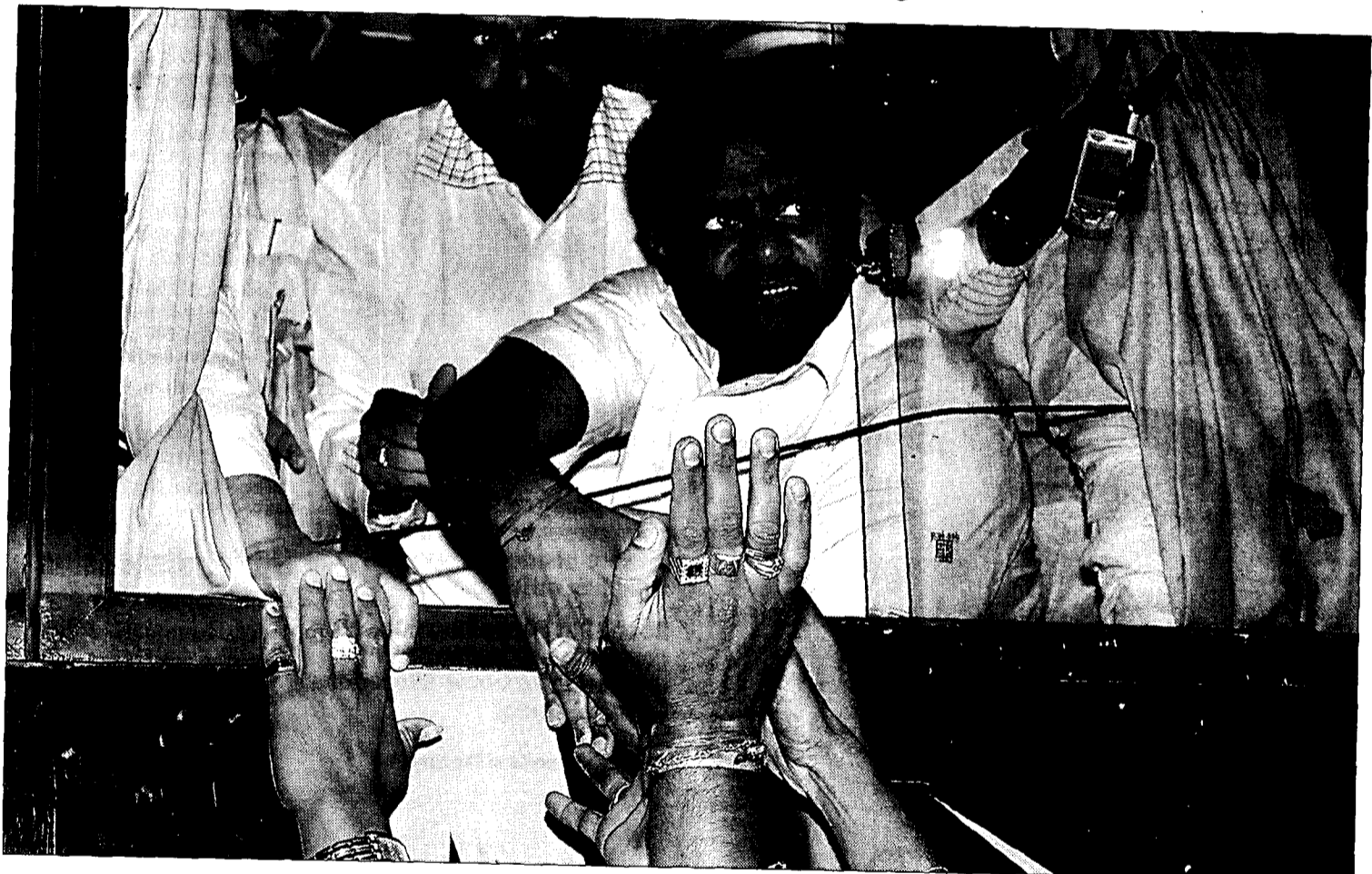
The analogy — how he could contest a parliamentary poll on debut — continues to bother him in his new avatar as commander of the Janata Dal(S)-BJP combine. For, he is a first-time legislator in the Assembly, but set to write a new record as leader of this new political arrangement in Karnataka. Unlike his older sibling, H.D. Revanna, this stocky politician has never occupied the position of a minister, so far.

A decade ago, a reticent Kumaranna (*anna* or elder brother in Kannada) would attribute his rise to "father's *ashirwada* (blessings)". That year, he entered the Lok Sabha to witness H.D. Deve Gowda's election as Prime Minister and found himself in the midst of high-voltage politics in New Delhi.

This time, for obvious reasons, his father's blessings are not being counted in public, but are concealed, with the senior Gowda taking a stand against his son's decision to find an ally in the BJP. Contrary to his public posturing, Gowda called on A.B. Vajpayee and other leaders in Delhi earlier this month. These "courtesy calls" provided the ideal opportunity to set the stage for a new partner in Karnataka and to offer the BJP an opportunity to share power for the first time in South India.

For the record, "Today is the saddest day in my 50-year political career", was the former Prime Minister's reaction to the media when he heard that his son had staked claim to forming the government with the support of BJP legislators. Next, he threatened to quit his seat (Hassan) in Parliament, which was followed by another threat to step down as President of the party. As part of his strategy to demonstrate the differences with Kumaraswamy, the leader will address a rally of party workers here on January 23rd.

But, to duck inconvenient questions, the former PM made known his intentions to talk to the media only on the day the Congress-led coalition government of Dharam Singh faces a vote of confidence on the floor of the Assembly. Except for the letter to Governor T.N.



H.D. Kumaraswamy greets supporters after a meeting with Karnataka governor T.K. Chaturvedi in Bangalore.

Chaturvedi that Kumaraswamy does not have the power to withdraw support to the government, Gowda has not even hinted at disciplinary action against his son.

Evidently a case of blood being thicker than water; according to Siddaramaiah, a lieutenant-turned-beta noire of Gowda. "I was suspended from the legislature party merely because I participated in a conference of the backward classes. How come Gowda has not taken any disciplinary action against

this man (Kumaraswamy), who split the party to join hands with the BJP?" Siddaramaiah said.

Within the Gowda clan, Kumaraswamy has been the favorite and trusted son. In 1996, as chief minister of Karnataka, Gowda sent word to industrialists to channel "donations" through him and not through Revanna, who was a member of the Assembly. After the initial success in the sprawling Kanakapura Lok Sabha seat in 1996, Kumaraswamy lost from that

constituency twice in 1998 and 1999 and returned to his first interest: cinema. In 2004, Gowda (Sr) appointed as general secretary of the state unit of Dal (S) and chose him as the party's nominee in the Ramanagaram Assembly constituency — a precinct where the pet son worked for the father's success in the 1994 Assembly polls and to lead the Janata Dal government in Karnataka before his elevation as Prime Minister. In the Congress-led coalition, Revanna was given the plum portfolios of public works and power, while the pet son was vested with organizational responsibilities, ostensibly to groom him for the top position in the state. Gowda elevated Kumaraswamy as working president of the state unit after beta noire Siddaramaiah was jettisoned from the Cabinet and party. Gowda's other sons have kept away from politics. But one has political ambitions and could step in at Gowda's home constituency of Hassan. Indeed, a party dominated by the ex-PM and sons that has prompted his critics to call the Dal(S) a "Father & Sons Company".



Move a betrayal: CPM

THE CPI(M) on Thursday said the JD(S) MLAs joining hands with the BJP, to stake claim to form a government in Karnataka, would pay "heavily" for their act. The party politburo said the MLAs' move was a "betrayal" of their commitment to the people that they would uphold a secular government. "The sheer opportunism of this move will cost them heavily, since the people won't take kindly to such unscrupulous manoeuvres".

MLAs boycott Guv speech

BJP AND JDS legislators in Karnataka on Thursday boycotted governor T.N. Chaturvedi's address to the joint session of the state legislature, contending that the coalition government headed by Dharam Singh had lost majority. However, Chaturvedi went ahead with the address, explaining the schemes undertaken by the government and listing out the priorities of the coalition government. Legislators of the JD(U), which was a BJP ally in the last Assembly polls, however attended the session.



**KARNATAKA
TANGLE**