

Sunita Kejriwal best person to keep AAP together: Saurabh Bharadwaj

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj has said that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita is the best person to keep the party together in the prevailing circumstances and asserted that her presence has had a "positive effect" on the cadre.

In an interaction with PTI editors at the agency's headquarters here, Bharadwaj, who is also a cabinet minister in the Delhi government, said Sunita Kejriwal has always said that she is the "messenger" of the Delhi chief minister who is currently in jail. Noting that the politics of a party does not just revolve around its manifesto, Bharadwaj said the support base and the emotional connection



between the cadre and the top leadership also plays a crucial role in keeping an organisation together.

Sunita Kejriwal's presence has had a positive impact, he added.

"She is delivering the messages of Arvind Kejriwal ji. This has had a great impact on our party cadre and among our sympathisers. We want to propagate it. In the present circumstances,

she is the best person to keep the party together," Bharadwaj said.

Kejriwal, arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in a money-laundering case linked to the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy, is in judicial custody till April 15.

His wife has addressed three digital briefings so far, in which she read out his messages from the ED cus-

tody and Tihar Jail.

In a political debut of sorts, she read out his message at the INDIA bloc 'maharally' on March 31. Asked if Sunita Kejriwal will campaign for the party in the Lok Sabha polls, he said, "We would love if this thing happens... if Sunita ji does take part in campaigning but it is her personal decision."

On further prodding whether there was some kind of "messaging" in Sunita Kejriwal taking centre stage after her husband's arrest, the minister replied in the negative.

AAP Rajiya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, who too was

arrested in the excise policy case and received bail on Wednesday, had met Sunita Kejriwal immediately after getting out of jail and was seen touching her feet.

Talking about it, the minister said if someone's elder brother is in some difficulty, he is duty-bound to look after his family.

"This is our culture. The BJP was saying that there would be fights among the party members after Kejriwal's arrest. Sanjay Singh considers Arvind Kejriwal his family, his elder brother. So, he touched her (Sunita Kejriwal) feet. We are working as one unit and one family," he said.

Delhi HC asks Centre to treat plea as representation to include ayurveda, yoga in Ayushman Bharat

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Friday asked the Centre to treat as a representation the plea that sought inclusion of ayurveda, yoga, and naturopathy in Ayushman Bharat, the national public health insurance scheme.

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora disposed of the public interest litigation (PIL) after asking the Union Ministry of Ayush to decide the representation expeditiously.

The high court, which had earlier dismissed the petition for non-prosecution, allowed the petitioner's

application to restore the plea and asked the ministry to treat it as representation.

The court passed the order after perusing the affidavit filed by the Ayush Ministry which stated that it was coordinating with the Health Ministry to take steps to include Indian healthcare system under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).

Last year, the high court had issued notice to the Union ministries of Health and Family Welfare, Ayush, Finance and Home Affairs and the Delhi government and asked them to file their counter affidavits in response to the PIL by peti-

SC imposes interim stay on Allahabad HC order on UP Board of Madarsa Education Act

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday imposed an interim stay on an order of the Allahabad High Court that declared the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004, "unconstitutional" and violative of the principle of secularism.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud issued notices to the Centre, Uttar Pradesh government and others on the pleas against the high court order.

"The object and purpose of Madarsa board is regula-

tory in nature and the Allahabad HC is not prima facie correct that establishment of board will breach secularism," the bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said.

The top court said HC has misconstrued provisions of the 2004 act as it does not provide for religious instruction and the purpose and character of the statute is regulatory in nature.

The high court on March 22 declared the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004,

"unconstitutional" and violative of the principle of secularism, and asked the state government to accommodate current students in the formal schooling system.

The high court had declared the law ultra vires on a writ petition filed by advocate Anshuman Singh Rathore.

The petitioner had challenged the constitutionality of the UP Madarsa Board as well as objected to the management of madarsa by the Minority Welfare Department, rather than the education department.

PM Modi to address election rally in UP's Saharanpur today

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

LUCKNOW: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address an election rally in Saharanpur and take part in a road show in Ghaziabad on Saturday in support of BJP candidates, a senior BJP leader said.

Prime Minister Modi will address an election rally at the old Radha Swami Satsang Bhawan near the Rainbow Public School, Delhi Road, around 9.30 am in support of BJP can-

didate from Saharanpur Raghav Lakhanpal and the party's Kairana candidate Pradeep Choudhary, state general secretary and Member of the Legislative Council Govind Narayan Shukla told PTI.

Later around 4 pm, the prime minister will participate in a road show organised from the Maliwada Chowk via Ambedkar Road to Chaudhary Road in Ghaziabad in support of the party's candidate Atul Garg.

Shukla said, "There is a wave in favour of the BJP and the NDA coalition parties among the people in favour of the work done by the prime minister in Uttar Pradesh. The public has made up its mind to make Modi ji the prime minister for the third time with a historic mandate."

He claimed that the opposition parties will find out on June 4, when the counting is taken up, that they have not been able to open their account in the state.

Modi disappointed Himachal, Gadkari resolved issues of highways: Congress' Pratibha Singh

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SHIMLA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi disappointed the people of Himachal Pradesh during the worst monsoon disaster while Union minister Nitin Gadkari resolved most of the issues related to the national highways in the state, said state Congress chief Pratibha Singh on Friday.

Himachal faced the worst ever natural disaster during the monsoons but no special financial assistance was given by the Centre. The state government gave Rs 4500-crore package on its own to provide succour to the affected people. This



issue would be raised during the elections, she said.

"I met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and requested him for financial help for disaster relief. He said your chief minister had also met me and will do

whatever is possible. I was hoping that announcement would come but was disappointed," Singh, the sitting MP from Mandi Lok Sabha seat, told PTI here.

However, she said Union Minister for Transport and

Highways Gadkari was very helpful.

Singh, who had earlier maintained that the workers are demoralised, today said, "The Congress workers are active and fully prepared for the elections and the party will win all the Lok Sabha seats and the assembly byelections in Himachal."

"We had won the assembly elections and will win the Lok Sabha polls and the assembly byelections on the strength of our workers who would go from door to door and tell about the achievements of the government," Pratibha Singh, wife of former chief minister Virbhadr Singh and moth-

er of Himachal Public Works Minister Vikramaditya Singh, said.

Earlier, Pratibha Singh had refused to contest the Lok Sabha elections claiming that the ground situation is "not favourable" and the Congress workers are disheartened.

However, later she mellowed down when the BJP announced Kangana Ranaut as its candidate from the Mandi Lok Sabha seat and said she would follow the directions of the Congress central leadership. She also maintained that the people want someone from the Virbhadr Singh family to contest this election.

RBI retains 7 pc growth forecast for FY25

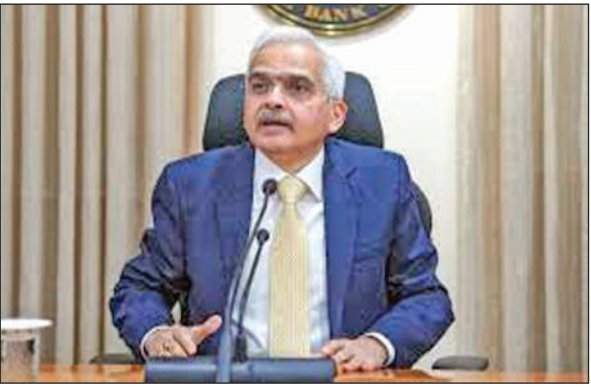
■ STATE TIMES NEWS

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank on Friday retained GDP growth forecast of 7 per cent for 2024-25 financial year, lower than the 7.6 per cent expansion estimated for FY24.

In its February monetary policy, the RBI had projected the GDP growth rate of 7 per cent for the financial year beginning April 1.

Announcing the current fiscal's first bi-monthly monetary policy, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the rural demand is gathering pace, and sustained growth in manufacturing sector should boost private investment.

However, there are headwinds from geopolitical ten-



sions and disruptions in the global trade route.

Das further said the country's real GDP is expected to grow 7 per cent in 2024-25, with June quarter growth at 7 per cent, and September quarter at 6.9 per cent. In the third and fourth quarter

the growth is expected to be 7 per cent each.

Earlier this week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the Reserve Bank has to accord "top-most priority" to growth and at the same time focus on trust and stability.

EC teams seize Rs 1 crore cash from vehicle in Arunachal



■ STATE TIMES NEWS

ITANAGAR: The flying squad and static surveillance team deployed by the Election Commission in Arunachal Pradesh seized Rs one crore cash from a vehicle in Longding district, a police officer said.

The cash was seized from the vehicle at Kanubari check gate on Thursday evening by the EC teams, the officer said. The vehicle which belongs to one Harshvardhan Singh, executive director of a private construction company, was following the convoy of Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, who went to Longding to address a party's election rally, he said.

"The vehicle was not part of the CM's convoy but was following the motorcade," Longding Superintendent of Police (SP) Dekio Gumja said. The income tax department was informed about the cash seizure and it will investigate the case and subsequently action will be taken as per the standard operating procedure, Gumja said. "Initial investigation suggested that the cash was meant for labourers payment by the construction company, whose works are

going on at three places in the region, including Sonari Medical College in Assam, Brigade Headquarters at Khonsa in Arunachal's Tirap district and Assam Police Battalion in Sivasagar. The company also executed many projects in Meghalaya, including the construction of the Legislative Assembly among others. The flying squads and static surveillance teams along with the police on Thursday also seized Rs 22.20 lakh in the state capital and another Rs 16.10 lakh at Seppa in East Kameng district during vehicle checking, Toko Babu, officer on special duty (OSD) to the state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) said. With Thursday's seizure, the total cash seized in the northeastern state so far since the model code of conduct (MCC) came into force, rose to over Rs 5.48 crore, while the cumulative figure of cash and the monetary value of other seized items including liquor, drugs, precious metals and freebies stood at over Rs 14.05 crore, he said. Meanwhile, the state government ordered that the issuance of import permits of packaged

liquor, bulk spirit and export permits for packaged liquor shall remain suspended with immediate effect till the completion of the election process or until further order whichever is earlier.

However, liquor permits in respect of military and para-military units may continue to be issued, Chief Secretary Dharmendra said in an order. Elections to the two Lok Sabha seats and 50 Arunachal Pradesh assembly constituencies will be held on April 19.

The counting of votes for the assembly elections will be held on June 2 while the counting of votes for Lok Sabha elections will be held on June 4.

BJP made bow-and-arrow symbol disappear from many parts of Maharashtra: Sena (UBT)

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

MUMBAI: The Shiv Sena (UBT) has accused the BJP of making the bow-and-arrow symbol disappear from many parts of Maharashtra after the saffron party started claiming the seats that were earlier contested by the undivided Shiv Sena.

In an editorial in party mouthpiece 'Saamana' on Friday, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena (UBT) said the undivided Shiv Sena used to contest in 23 of the 48 seats in Maharashtra on its bow-and-arrow symbol.

Sena (UBT), which is a part of the opposition alliance Maha Vikas



Aghadi, also claimed that the BJP high command was behind the move not to repeat many sitting Shiv Sena MPs.

The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena has not renominated Bhavana Gawli, Krupal Tumane and Hemant Patil, sitting MPs

from Yavatmal-Washim, Ramtek and Hingoli.

"But the Shinde group (Shiv Sena) is not even getting half of the seats now (in the seat-sharing agreement) and the BJP has made the bow-and-arrow symbol disappear in four-five seats," the editorial said.

Shiv Sena, BJP and Ajit Pawar-led NCP are part of the ruling Mahayuti alliance in the state.

The Sena (UBT) alleged that the BJP also made the bow-and-arrow symbol disappear in Sindhudurg-Ratnagiri, a seat traditionally represented by the Bal Thackeray-founded party but is now being claimed by the saffron outfit.

The editorial wondered if Shiv Sena's symbol will endure in Kalyan and Thane, the bastions of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. His son Shrikant Shinde is the sitting MP from Kalyan.

"There is a remote possibility that those being nominated for the Lok Sabha

polls will win. So the BJP has erased the historic bow-and-arrow symbol from the political scene of Maharashtra," the editorial added.

The Sena (UBT), which got the 'flaming torch' symbol, has so far announced candidates for 21 seats.

The Shinde-led Sena has declared candidates in nine seats, the BJP 24, the NCP four and its ally Rashtriya Samaj Paksha in one constituency. Candidates for ten seats are yet to be announced by the Mahayuti.

The 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra will go to polls in five phases between April 19 and May 20 and votes will be counted on June 4.

Sensex gains marginally to scale new peak after RBI policy decision

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

MUMBAI: Equity benchmark index Sensex registered marginal gains to hit a fresh lifetime high of 74,248 on Friday after the Reserve Bank maintained the status quo on key interest rates amid a negative trend in global markets.

The six-member rate-setting panel of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday kept the benchmark interest rates unchanged at 6.5 per cent for the seventh time in a row. It also expressed concerns over food inflation, given IMD's prediction of above-normal maximum temperatures during April-June.

The 30-share BSE Sensex inched up 20.59 points or 0.03 per cent to settle at a fresh record of 74,248.22. The index oscillated between the intra-day peak

of 74,361.11 and the low of 73,946.92.

The broader NSE Nifty ended with a marginal loss of 0.95 points at 22,513.70. As many as 28 components of the 50-share benchmark ended in the red.

"Although the RBI policy meeting unfolded as anticipated, concerns over food inflation and warnings of a heat wave tempered sentiment. While the main domestic indices concluded with marginal movement, the Bank Nifty edged higher, propelled by robust credit growth in Q4 FY24."

"The global sentiment was dampened by the rise in oil prices and tensions in the Middle East. Investors remain attentive to upcoming US non-farm payroll and unemployment data, seeking clarity on the

Federal Reserve's future rate path," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Kotak Bank was the largest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 2.09 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, ITC, SBI, M&M and ICICI Bank. On the other hand, UltraTech Cement, L&T, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards.

Among sectoral indices, realty surged by 1.49 per cent, financial services advanced by 0.92 per cent and bankex gained 0.83 per cent. While BSE Services rose by 0.79 per cent, BSE FMCg went up 0.51 per cent.

In contrast, teck declined by 0.51 per cent, IT fell by 0.44 per cent and capital

goods dipped by 0.22 per cent. Other laggards included auto, oil & gas, and metal, slipping 0.17 per cent, 0.15 per cent and 0.11 per cent, respectively.

BSE largecap gained 0.15 per cent, while midcap and smalleap indices rose 0.50 per cent.

Interest-rate-sensitive bank and NBFC stocks gained on Friday after the RBI decided to maintain interest rates.

Among the banking counters, Kotak Mahindra Bank jumped 2.09 per cent to end at Rs 1,785.25, and HDFC Bank went 1.41 per cent higher to finish at Rs 1,549.40 apiece on the BSE. Also, State Bank of India grew 0.67 per cent to end at Rs 764.35 each, IndusInd Bank climbed 0.66 per cent to settle at Rs 1,554, and ICICI Bank

rose 0.51 per cent to finish at Rs 1,082.35.

However, Bank of Baroda fell 0.24 per cent to close at Rs 268.70 per piece on the exchange.

Among the NBFC stocks, SBI Cards and Payment Services jumped 5.24 per cent to close at Rs 730.45, Jio Financial Services climbed 3.24 per cent to settle at Rs 373.05, and Bajaj Finserv gained 1.56 per cent to end at Rs 1,681 apiece on the exchange.

The BSE Bankex increased 451.11 points or 0.83 per cent to close at 54,590.61. Global oil benchmark Brent crude advanced 0.11 per cent to USD 90.75 a barrel.

Asian markets were lower, with Japan's Nikkei 225 losing 1.96 per cent and Hang Seng of Hong Kong

declining 0.01 per cent. South Korea index Kospi fell 1.01 per cent.

European markets were trading in the red. Germany's DAX and London's FTSE 100 lost 1.57 per cent and 0.90 per cent. CAC40 of France went down by 1.36 per cent.

The US markets closed largely lower in the overnight trade on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,136.47 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

On Thursday, the BSE benchmark Sensex surged 350.81 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at its lifetime high of 74,227.63. The NSE Nifty also hit its fresh peak of 22,514.65, gaining 80 points or 0.36 per cent.