

## **There was never a weaker PMO as now: Arun Shourie**

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**New Delhi:** In a sharp attack on the Narendra Modi government, BJP leader Arun Shourie on Monday contended that it believes that managing economy means "managing the headlines" and that people had started recalling the days of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

"Doctor Singh (Manmohan Singh) ko log yaad karne lag gaye hain (People have started recalling the days of Manmohan Singh). The way to characterise policies of the government is Congress plus a cow. Policies are the same," Shourie said at book launch function.

The function to launch 'Turn of The Tortoise', a book written by former Business Standard Editor-in-Chief T N Ninan, was attended by Manmohan Singh, Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian and former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran.

Pointing out differences between the present and the previous governments, Shourie said "there is clearer belief (in the present dispensation) that managing economy means managing the headlines and this is not really going to work." Targeting Modi, the minister in the Vajpayee government said, "I feel there was never a weaker a PMO as now".

He said "there has never been as great a centralisation of functions, not power, of functions in PMO as now. ...If fellows don't have domain expertise, that Brajesh Mishra had, L K Jha had, all these principal secretaries had, then things get stuck."

Shourie said, "everybody is busy and everybody is doing very hard work, but it is not resulting in two there big things that was problem at that time(UPA government time)."

Elaborating, he said, "If you see impediments that were there in tax administration, virtually no change... Banking reform has been delayed by year and a half for no reason. So therefore this tortoise is very generous metaphor. Ye to so hi jata hai (this tortoise goes to sleep)."

He claimed that industrialists are afraid of speaking against the government.

"The industrialists who meet the Prime Minister don't speak whole truth. After meeting PM, they wonder what is happening and say 'please do something'. And in front of media they give the government 9 out of 10," Shourie claimed.

Shourie noted that Parliament has become alibi for not doing anything. While taking digs at the Modi government, Shourie said it should embrace everybody instead of fighting.

"Don't get into fight with everyone. If you want to build Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, you require support of 5 Chief Ministers," he said.

Speaking at the event, Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian said the work on the draft bankruptcy law is at an advanced stage.

Noting that India is one of unique development models, Subramanian said India is "a precautionous development model" in both economic and political sense.

"India is a country which is not following normal economic development model...India is growing by defying its comparative advantage," he said.

"We have lots of space to grow using our cheap labour. If we don't do stupid things then we can grow very rapidly," he said.

Meanwhile, BJP spokesperson Siddharth Nath Singh brushed aside Shourie's statement saying, "All I can say for our former colleague Arun Shourie is that somewhere, his pain of not being in the government anymore is being reflected through his career nationalism."

- PTI