

INFLATION IS NOT A 'RED LETTERED' PRIORITY FOR GOVT. NOW, SAYS FM

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Focus on jobs: The red-lettered priorities would be jobs and making sure India stays on the growth path, says FM. **AFPSHAMMI MEHRA**

Inflation was not a 'red-lettered' priority now for the government as it had been brought down to a 'manageable level' over the past two months, and job creation and equitable distribution of wealth were instead the key current priorities, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Wednesday.

"I am not sure I can have the luxury of sequencing priorities, several things will have to happen simultaneously," Ms. Sitharaman said, speaking at the U.S. India Business Council's annual general meeting titled 'India Ideas Summit'. "Of course, some are red-lettered and some others may not be," she replied, when queried by Nasdaq executive vice chairman Ed Knight on the top policy priorities for India and how their implementation may be sequenced.

"The red-lettered ones will definitely be jobs, equitable wealth distribution and making sure that India is still moving on the path of growth. In that sense, inflation is not red-lettered, I hope that we have shown in the last couple of months we were able to bring it to some manageable level," she said.

Retail inflation in India moderated to 6.71% in July, from an eight-year high of 7.79% in April. Ms. Sitharaman exuded confidence that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which was 'fairly clued in' to developments arising from the steps taken by the U.S. Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, would be able to handle the monetary policy challenges 'without major blips'.

The economy's revival, she said, had largely been helped by the government as it followed the right kind of policies, executed quick reforms and ensured there was 'hand holding' for targeted sectors, instead of 'splurging or printing money'.

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