

## NEED COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The digital age, while bringing unprecedented convenience and connectivity, has also given rise to a formidable threat: cybercrime. From phishing and ransomware to identity theft and online scams, cybercriminals are exploiting vulnerabilities at an alarming rate. Addressing this challenge requires a multi-faceted strategy combining technology, awareness, legal frameworks, and global collaboration.

One of the first steps to combat cybercrime is creating robust and adaptive legal frameworks. Governments must regularly update cybercrime laws to address emerging threats while ensuring that cross-border agreements facilitate the investigation and prosecution of offenders. Stricter penalties should be imposed to deter potential criminals. Models like the European Union's GDPR and the US's CLOUD Act can serve as templates for other nations.

Awareness is a powerful weapon in the fight against cybercrime. National campaigns should educate citizens on safe online practices, such as recognizing phishing scams, using strong passwords, and securing personal information. Incorporating cybersecurity education into school curricula can help foster a culture of vigilance from an early age. Additionally, businesses must prioritize employee training to identify and respond to cyber threats effectively.

Staying ahead of cybercriminals requires cutting-edge technology. Tools like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) can predict and detect cyberattacks in real-time. Encryption ensures data remains secure from unauthorized access, while blockchain technology offers tamper-proof records and secure transactions. Investing in these technologies, alongside robust endpoint security measures, is vital for both governments and private enterprises.

Investigating cybercrimes demands specialized expertise. Establishing dedicated cybercrime units equipped with advanced forensic tools and training law enforcement officers in ethical hacking and digital forensics is critical. Collaboration with private cybersecurity firms can also provide valuable resources and expertise. Internationally, organizations like Interpol's Cybercrime Centre facilitate cross-border cooperation.

Governments cannot tackle cybercrime alone. Collaboration with private companies is essential to sharing threat intelligence and pooling resources.

## BJP vs SP: Political Battle Over Gaushala and Perfume Park

■ AJAY KUMAR

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav recently made a controversial statement regarding gaushalas (cow shelters), targeting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by saying that the BJP likes bad odors, which is why they are building gaushalas, whereas the Samajwadi Party prefers fragrance, which is why they created a perfume park. This statement has triggered a political storm. The BJP has called it an insult to Sanatan Dharma, stating that Akhilesh Yadav's comment is an affront to Hindu traditions. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said that this statement is not only disrespectful to cows but also an attack on Hindu culture and faith. He further stated that the Samajwadi Party is now completely entangled in vote-bank politics, which is why such remarks are being made.

Akhilesh Yadav's statement has come at a time when preparations for the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections are in full swing. This remark has also sparked internal controversy within his own party. While many Samajwadi Party leaders have remained silent publicly, there is growing discontent within the party. Senior SP leader and MP Awadhesh Prasad stated that the cow is our mother and should be respected. He emphasized that the foundation of the Samajwadi Party is to respect all sections of society, and such statements could damage the party's image.

Akhilesh Yadav has often been embroiled in controversies due to his statements. Recently, he made a contentious remark about Rana Sanga, which led to criticism against his party. Additionally, his comments about Aurangzeb also stirred discontent among

Hindu voters. Political analysts believe that Akhilesh Yadav is trying to consolidate the Muslim vote bank to sustain his political standing, but this strategy could backfire by alienating his traditional Yadav voter base.

The Yadav community has had a long-standing connection with cow protection. From the Mahabharata era to the present day, the Yadav community has shown deep reverence for cows. Lord Krishna himself was born into the Yadav lineage and spent his life engaged in cow service. Even today, the Yadav community in India considers cows an integral part of their culture. Mulayam Singh Yadav also believed in cow protection and had publicly stated multiple times that he owned more cows than any other leader. When he was the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, he had introduced several schemes for gaushalas.

The BJP has reacted strongly to Akhilesh Yadav's statement. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath called it an insult to Hindu faith, saying that the cow is the soul of Indian culture and that any disrespect towards it will not be tolerated. He accused Akhilesh Yadav of making politically motivated remarks aimed at dividing society. Union Minister Giriraj Singh also condemned the statement, arguing that Akhilesh Yadav has completely lost his political direction and is now trapped in vote-bank politics.

Akhilesh Yadav's comment holds significance because political parties in Uttar Pradesh are already strategizing for the 2027 elections. The BJP is strengthening its Hindutva politics, and Akhilesh Yadav's statement has only given the BJP a stronger stance. Political experts believe that such remarks could alienate Akhilesh Yadav's tra-

ditional Yadav vote bank.

The statement regarding cows and gaushalas has sparked outrage among several sections of society. In rural areas, cow protection holds great importance and is considered a part of Sanatan Dharma. Cow dung and cow urine are widely used in Ayurveda and agriculture. Many Indian households continue to uphold the tradition of cow service. In such a scenario, Akhilesh Yadav's remarks could not only prove politically damaging but also hurt the sentiments of a large section of society.

Some leaders within the Samajwadi Party have urged Akhilesh Yadav to clarify his statement to mitigate potential damage. It is possible that in the coming days, Akhilesh Yadav may issue a clarification, stating that his remarks were misinterpreted. This would not be the first time he has had to backtrack on his statements. He has previously retracted comments following controversies.

The BJP is actively capitalizing on this issue. Party leaders are framing it as an attack on Hindu faith and leaving no stone unturned in portraying Akhilesh Yadav as anti-Hindu. The Samajwadi Party has already been accused of Muslim appeasement, and this statement has provided the BJP with another opportunity to reinforce that narrative. The BJP's IT cell is aggressively promoting this issue on social media to tarnish Akhilesh Yadav's image.

The Yadav vote bank plays a crucial role in Uttar Pradesh politics. The BJP has long been attempting to attract Yadav voters. By appointing a Yadav Chief Minister in Madhya Pradesh, the BJP sent a message that it provides fair representation to the community. Additionally, several ministers from the Yadav community have been includ-

ed in the central government. Through these measures, the BJP aims to convey that it is as much a well-wisher of the Yadavs as the Samajwadi Party. If Akhilesh Yadav continues making controversial statements, a significant portion of the Yadav vote bank may shift toward the BJP.

Political analysts in Uttar Pradesh believe that Akhilesh Yadav should exercise caution while making statements and avoid commenting on sensitive issues that could hurt the sentiments of a large section of society. The cow has always been an integral part of Indian culture and tradition, and all leaders must respect that. While addressing religious and faith-based topics in politics, leaders should be particularly cautious, as such matters are deeply tied to people's emotions.

Following Akhilesh Yadav's statement, it remains to be seen how he responds and how the Samajwadi Party handles the controversy. Will he retract his statement, or will he stand by it? That remains to be seen. For now, the BJP appears unwilling to let go of this issue, and it is likely to be used as a major weapon against the Samajwadi Party in upcoming elections.

This is a politically crucial time for the Samajwadi Party. If Akhilesh Yadav fails to adopt the right strategy, he may suffer losses in the upcoming elections. The BJP is fully focused on sharpening its Hindutva politics, and statements like these by Akhilesh Yadav could end up benefiting the BJP. Ultimately, it is clear that political leaders must be cautious with their words to ensure their messages create a positive impact on society and do not offend anyone's sentiments.

(The writer is Senior Journalist from Uttar Pradesh)

## Home return of NASA astronauts after 9 months in space

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF



NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams safely returned to Earth on March 19 after spending over nine months in space due to delays in the Boeing Starliner Crew Flight Test (CFT) mission.

Their SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule, Freedom, splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico near Tallahassee, Florida, concluding a mission that garnered global attention.

Indian-origin NASA astronaut Sunita Williams, along with her colleague Butch Wilmore, safely returned to Earth on Wednesday after an unexpected 286-day mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS). Initially planned as a short 8-day flight, their mission was extended to 9 months due to technical issues with their spacecraft. Despite the challenges, Williams and Wilmore demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. The SpaceX Dragon capsule carrying them touched down off the Florida coast at 3.30 am on Wednesday.

The astronaut, who went on an eight-day mission to space with fellow astronaut Butch Wilmore, was forced the stay in zero gravity for nine months after the Starliner spacecraft she piloted to space developed multiple technical faults.

What seemed to be a quick test certification flight, a process Sunita had been familiar with thanks to her test pilot days in the US Navy, turned into a long stay filled with new adven-



tures, record-shattering spacewalk and a political slugfest. The astronauts, part of the Crew-9 mission, ended their spaceflight as they splashed down in the Atlantic Ocean having braved the challenging re-entry through Earth's atmosphere.

Williams and Wilmore, both former Navy pilots, had flown to the orbital lab on June 5 last year on what was supposed to be an eight-day mission and the first crewed flight of a Boeing Starliner. They were left stranded after the Starliner capsule suffered propulsion issues. Deemed unfit to fly, it returned uncrewed in September.

Amid uncertainty over their return journey,

NASA reassigned them to SpaceX's Crew-9 mission, and a Dragon spacecraft was sent in September with a two-member crew, instead of the usual four, to make space for the stranded astronauts.

Bone and muscle deterioration, radiation exposure, and vision impairment are some of the challenges space travellers have to face upon their return to Earth after a prolonged stay. Muscles, usually activated by simply moving around on Earth, also weaken because they no longer need to work as hard.

The lack of gravity causes significant and often irreparable, bone density loss. As per NASA, for every month in space, astronauts' weight-bearing

bones become roughly one per cent less dense if they don't take precautions to counter this loss.

One of the most dangerous impacts of spending time in space is radiation exposure. While Earth's atmosphere and magnetic field shield humans from high levels of radiation, such protection is not available for astronauts.

Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore launched aboard the Boeing Starliner on June 5, 2024, as part of its first crewed mission. The plan was to test the spacecraft for an eight-day mission before returning to Earth. However, shortly after docking at the ISS, NASA detected several technical issues with the Starliner, including helium leaks and thruster malfunctions.

A recent image of Williams looking thinner also raised health concerns, but she reassured the public that this was due to fluid shift—a common effect of microgravity where bodily fluids move upwards, changing facial appearance. She also emphasized that she has been exercising regularly to maintain muscle strength.

The decision follows US President Donald Trump's abrupt demand to SpaceX CEO Elon Musk last month to bring Wilmore and Williams back to Earth "as soon as possible," pleading for an end to their mission that in large part had already been decided on last year.

SpaceX developed its Crew Dragon capsule with roughly \$3 billion in funding from NASA's Commercial Crew Program, which aims to entrust companies with spaceflight with the hopes of stimulating a private market and bringing costs down.

Within just an hour of their landing, both astronauts exited the capsule, smiled and waved at the cameras. Despite the lengthy mission, their spirits appeared high as they were escorted away in

reclining stretchers for standard post-flight medical check-ups.

From maintaining and cleaning the massive, football field-sized station to replacing old hardware, Williams played a hands-on role in keeping the ISS running smoothly. Alongside her team, she also said to have carried out several scientific experiments and contributed significantly to ongoing research.

According to NASA, Williams and her team logged an impressive 900 hours of scientific research. Throughout their extended mission, they conducted more than 150 experiments. Williams also set a new benchmark as she became the woman to spend the maximum time in space. One of the highlights of her time aboard the ISS was her record-setting 62 hours and 9 minutes of spacewalks spread across 9 excursions outside the station.

Williams contributed to several high-impact research projects, including studies on how microgravity influences fluid systems in space. She also worked on developing new reactors for water recovery and fuel cells — technology that could be crucial for future long-duration missions, as per NASA. One of the most promising initiatives she participated in was the BioNutrients project. This research explores how beneficial bacteria can be used to produce fresh nutrients for astronauts, a step that could transform how spacefarers get essential vitamins and minerals during long stays away from Earth.

Williams, capping her third spaceflight, has tallied 608 cumulative days in space, the second most for any U.S. astronaut after Peggy Whitson's 675 days. Russian cosmonaut Oleg Kononenko set the world record last year at 878 cumulative days.

## J&K Budget 2025-26: Growth, Development and Key Initiatives

■ PUPU JI KOUL

Budget is basically a planning and controlling tool and exercise strictly speaking in economic and managerial sense. Budget making is an early exercise and the governments at state level and central level prepare budgets annually and present before legislative assembly and parliament for debate, discussion and passing. As it had to Jammu and Kashmir as it had no elected government for seven long years and so its budget could not be prepared and presented by the UT government.

Budgets for all these years were made by the parliament and thrust upon the J&K UT. Such budgets have no reflected of the ground realities and were far from local needs and aspirations.

Now there is an elected /people's government in place in J&K, so the political executive and the UT government is all set to table its maiden budget in the legislative Assembly which will focus on the issues and needs of the gullible people and such a budget will be in real sense a people's and democratic planning and financial as well as controlling document and it is expected to focus on the promises and commitments made with the electorate during the recently held assembly elections.

For the first time J&K chief minister Omar Abdullah has held pre-budget discussions with all most all stakeholders and public representatives and it has concluded and now the budget for year 2025-26 is ready and it will be tabled before the lower house of the legislature as there is only one house as the bicameral arrangement had been done away with much before. In all probability the new budget of the new government of NC, Congress alliance will be presented in the legislative assembly on 7th of February 2025 and all the eyes of the political parties, business houses and the general public are set on it and they will be watching what is in store for them in the new budget.



Since budget session had already begun on 3rd of February with the address of the LG Manoj Shina who put before the legislative his governments focus areas and he also praised chief minister's novel approach of having held detailed discussions with different stakeholders and public representatives before the actual budget will be presented before the legislative assembly. LG has rightly said that the budget of the J&K UT will be historic one being framed and to be present by the elected government after a long gap of seven years.

The first budget of the newly elected government will rightly focus on development, employment along with women and youth as well as agriculture and health facilities and required allocations will be earmarked for all these areas of priorities. The new budget for Jammu and Kashmir is likely to focus

heavily on infrastructure development, employment generation, youth-centric schemes, women empowerment initiatives, and addressing the needs of rural areas with a particular emphasis on improving basic amenities like electricity and healthcare across the region, this will include significant allocations for ongoing projects like Udhampur-Srinagar-Bharamulla Rail Link and Zojila Tunnel.

As the J&K governments pre-budget discussions with different departments have been completed and the budgetary proposals for 2025-26 and finalized revised estimates for 2024-25, the first budget of the new government will focus on development, employment along with women and youth-centric schemes. It is learnt people friendly schemes and welfare measures will form the core of the budget. It has come to light that

the budget will not only focus on employment generation, but provisions will also be made for infrastructure development across the UT along with free electricity, announcements like pension, LPG cylinders, and relief from unscheduled power cuts. The budget will youth and women-centric along with the development of the UT. It is also learnt that in the new budget of JK provision will be made for free electricity up to 200 units to all eligible families of Jammu and Kashmir. To make J&K self-reliant in power generation, stress will also be laid on accelerating four mega hydroelectric projects with 3014 MW capacity.

However, monthly relief to economically weaker women, distribution of LPG cylinders, and ration annually, are also expected to find proper allocations in this year's budget so that these beneficial schemes for the poor people will continue to give some relief to these targeted of the people. It is also learnt from the reliable sources that agriculture, horticulture and health sectors will be strengthened to create employment opportunities and modalities are being worked out are incorporated in the budget allocations.

Tourism industry, accelerating the development of industrial areas, and setting up new enterprises is also expected to find place in the budget allocations. The key areas of focus in the new budget to be presented by the chief minister for the first time as he holds the important portfolio of finance ministry are as under- A-Infrastructure development. Investment in roads, bridges, railways, and other connectivity projects, including the completion of ongoing projects is a priority item in the new budget to be tabled on 7th February.

B-Skill development and employment generation will be another important item of priority in the new budget as the problem of joblessness is plaguing our UT and thus need efforts to create more jobs for the youth.

C-Agriculture and allied sectors will find good allocation in the budget to give boost to farm economy. Support to farmers through irrigation facilities, modern farming techniques and market access will be the areas of priority in the budget to enhance agriculture productivity and augment the income of farmers.

D-Promotion of tourism may be another main area of attention in this year's budget which will boost tourism economy and enhance income of all those people connected directly and indirectly with tourism industry. It includes eco-tourism and adventure tourism.

F-Upgrading existing educational institutions and healthcare facilities, particularly in rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir may find attention in the budget.

G-Increased funding for healthcare facilities, particularly in remote areas will find expression in this year's budget. H-Programs for women empowerment and social welfare may find mention in the budget. I-Another area of focus will be development of backward areas within J&K.

J-Another main area is equitable allocation of funds between Jammu and Kashmir regions to allay fear and grievances of People and political parties from Jammu. So addressing regional disparities will be an item of focus in the budget to alleviate the fears of the Jammu region. In short, the new Budget of the NC-Congress alliance government will prioritize infrastructure development, employment generation, sustainable agriculture, tourism promotion, social inclusion, and development of new industrial estates with a particular focus on women and youth-centric schemes, alongside provisions for improved electricity access and relief from power cuts, moreover, investment in roads and bridge projects. The budget 2025-26 of J&K will be exemplary as it will be growth centered, inclusive and people friendly made by keeping promises made with the people in the recent assembly polls.