

# NASA decides to keep 2 astronauts in space until February

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

CAPE CANAVERAL: NASA decided Saturday it's too risky to bring two astronauts back to Earth in Boeing's troubled new capsule, and they'll have to wait until next year for a ride home with SpaceX. What should have been a weeklong test flight for the pair will now last more than eight months.

The seasoned pilots have been stuck at the International Space Station since the beginning of June. A cascade of vexing thruster failures and helium leaks in the new capsule marred their trip to the space station, and they ended up in a holding pattern as engineers conducted tests and debated what to do about the flight back.

After almost three months, the decision finally came down from NASA's highest ranks on Saturday. Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams will come back in a SpaceX capsule in February. Their empty Starliner capsule will unlock in early September and attempt to return on autopilot with a touchdown in the New Mexico desert.

As Starliner's test pilots, the pair should have overseen this critical last leg of the journey.

"A test flight by nature is neither safe nor routine," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. The decision "is a result of a commitment to safety."

Nelson said lessons learned

from NASA's two space shuttle accidents played a role. This time, he noted, open dialogue was encouraged rather than crushed.

"This has not been an easy decision, but it is absolutely the right one," added Jim Free, NASA's associate administrator.

It was a blow to Boeing, adding to the safety concerns plaguing the company on its airplane side. Boeing had counted on Starliner's first crew trip to revive the troubled spacecraft program after years of delays and ballooning costs. The company had insisted Starliner was safe based on all the recent thruster tests both in space and on the ground.

Boeing did not participate in Saturday's news conference by NASA, but released a statement: "Boeing continues to focus, first and foremost, on the safety of the crew and spacecraft." The company said it is preparing the spacecraft "for a safe and successful return."

Rand Corp.'s Jan Osburg, a senior engineer who specializes in aerospace and defense, said NASA made the right choice. "But the U.S. is still left with egg on its face due to the Starliner design issues that should have been caught earlier."

Wilmore, 61, and Williams, 58, are both retired Navy captains with previous long-duration spaceflight experience. Before their June 5 launch



from Cape Canaveral, Wilmore and Williams said their families bought into the uncertainty and stress of their professional careers decades ago.

During their lone orbital news conference last month, the astronauts said they had trust in the thruster testing being conducted. They had no complaints, they added, and enjoyed pitching in with space station work.

Wilmore's wife, Deanna, said she and their daughters, along with family and friends, "were praying for a safe return on whatever spacecraft that may be." While they are disappointed that he will be away longer, "we know that it's the Lord's plan," she said via text.

Flight operations director Norm Knight said he talked to the astronauts Saturday and they fully support the decision to postpone their return.

There were few options. The SpaceX capsule currently parked at the space station is reserved for the four residents who have been there since March. They will return in late September, their routine six-month stay extended a month by the Starliner dilemma. NASA said it would be unsafe to squeeze two more into the capsule, except in an emergency.

replacement Soyuz capsule for three men whose original craft was damaged by space junk. The switch pushed their six-month mission to just over a year.

Former Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, applauded the decision via X: "Good to err on the side of caution for astronaut lives." Long missions are "what astronauts work their entire career for. I'd take it in a heartbeat!"

Starliner's woes began long before its latest flight.

Bad software fouled the first test flight without a crew in 2019, prompting a do-over in 2022. Then parachute and other issues cropped up, including a helium leak in the capsule's propellant system that nixed a launch attempt in May. The leak eventually was deemed to be isolated and small enough to pose no concern. But more leaks sprouted following liftoff, and five thrusters also failed.

All but one of those small thrusters restarted in flight. But engineers were perplexed by ground testing that showed a thruster seal swelling and obstructing a propellant line. They theorized the seals in orbit may have expanded and then reverted to their normal size. Officials said the results marked the turning point, as their concerns grew.

With all the uncertainty about how the thrusters

might perform, "There was too much risk for the crew," Steve Stich, NASA's commercial crew program manager, told reporters.

These 28 thrusters are vital. Besides needed for space station rendezvous, they keep the capsule pointed in the right direction at flight's end as bigger engines steer the craft out of orbit. Coming in crooked could result in catastrophe.

With the Columbia disaster still fresh in many minds - the shuttle broke apart during reentry in 2003, killing all seven aboard - NASA made an extra effort to embrace open debate over Starliner's return capability.

Despite Saturday's decision, NASA isn't giving up on Boeing. Nelson said he is "100%" certain that Starliner will fly again.

NASA went into its commercial crew program a decade ago wanting two competing US companies ferrying astronauts in the post-shuttle era. Boeing won the bigger contract: more than USD 4 billion, compared with SpaceX's USD 2.6 billion.

With station supply runs already under its belt, SpaceX aced its first of now nine astronaut flights in 2020, while Boeing got bogged down in design flaws that set the company back more than USD 1 billion. NASA officials still hold out hope that Starliner's problems can be corrected in time for another crew flight in another year or so.

# Mamata-led Govt failed to ensure women's safety; will pay the price: Srinivasan



**STATE TIMES NEWS**

JAMMU: BJP Mahila Moreha national president Vanathi Srinivasan on Sunday criticised the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC government in West Bengal for its alleged failure to ensure safety of women and said "it will pay the price for it".

Srinivasan, who was here to meet with party's women wing leaders ahead of upcoming three-phased assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir beginning September 18, said the alleged rape and murder of a doctor has shaken the society and the women are marching in thousands to seek justice for the victim.

"As far as the Kolkata rape and murder (of a postgraduate trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical college on August 9) is concerned, it is highly unfortunate that the state government is not understanding the importance of safety of the women," the BJP women wing chief told reporters on the side-

lines of the function here.

She said it is not for the first time such a thing had happened but 2011 onwards, there are hundreds of such incidents which had taken place in the state.

"Mahila Moreha of the BJP is always giving voice to the victims and for their justice, we are agitating. After this rape and murder of a doctor, I personally went to Kolkata to participate in the silent march...there is a difference, normally political parties come to the streets and agitate against the government but now the ordinary women, thousands of women, are coming on the streets and fighting against the government," she said.

The BJP leader said the women protesters are raising their voice for justice for that woman doctor but "unfortunately, this arrogant Mamata Banerjee government is not understanding the sensitivity of the issue and they will pay the price for it."

# REC to provide Rs 45,000 Cr finance to JNPA

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

NEW DELHI: State-owned REC Ltd on Sunday said it has inked an initial pact to provide up to Rs 45,000 crore financing to various Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) projects. REC Ltd, under the Ministry of Power and a leading non-banking financial company (NBFC), signed an MoU with Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) for financing up to Rs 45,000 crore for various upcoming JNPA projects, including development of VadHAVAN Port, a company statement said. REC Executive Director Rahul Dwivedi signed the MoU with JNPA Chairman Umesh Sharad Wagh. The MoU was signed in the presence of Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal.

This MoU is to establish a framework for cooperation between JNPA and REC, whereby JNPA implements projects in the infrastructure sector of its expertise and REC shall provide the required funds, the statement said.

# For developed India, guarantee of accessible justice to all is important: PM

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

JAIPUR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the guarantee of simple and accessible justice to all is important as the country moves towards the dream of a developed India.

Speaking at the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations of Rajasthan High Court in Jodhpur, Modi also referred to his Independence Day remark on 'secular civil code' and said that the judiciary has been advocating this for decades. "As we move forward with the dream of a developed India, there should be a guarantee of simple, easy and accessible justice for everyone. This is very important," he said. The Prime Minister said that today the people's dreams, their aspirations are bigger, "so it is important that our systems are modernized". "Innovation and modernisation of the system is equally important for providing justice for all," he added.

# India, US look forward to working together: Rajnath Singh

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

WASHINGTON: India and the US look forward to working together and benefiting from each other's experiences, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has said, as he visited a top American naval surface warfare facility in Maryland.

Singh is in the US on a four-day official visit to further boost the comprehensive global strategic partnership between the US and India.

"Visited the Naval Surface Warfare Centre at Carderock and witnessed the pathbreaking experiments at the facility," Singh said in a post on X.

"India and the US look forward to work together and benefit from each other's experiences," he wrote after he visited the top American naval facility on Saturday.

Earlier during the visit, Singh met the US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin.

Austin praised the momentum behind the US-India relationship during the meeting with Singh.

He noted the countries' increased cooperation on a range of defence issues, including efforts to strengthen critical supply chains and interoperability between their militaries.



stronger," Austin said.

"We're expanding our defence industrial ties and working to co-produce more capabilities and strengthen supply chain resilience," he said.

He said that the countries have increased operational cooperation across all domains and highlighted India's participation in this summer's Rim of the Pacific, a large-scale exercise led by the US Navy in Hawaii that brought together 29 partner nations.

The Indian navy remains an important security provider in the Indian Ocean, Austin said.

"Indian sailors have helped mariners in distress and defended global commerce. So, we are committed to deepening naval cooperation, to doing more together with unmanned technology, and to strengthening undersea domain awareness," he said.

Singh said the growing cooperation covers "all areas of human endeavour."

# SMVDU launches week-long campus plantation drive



**STATE TIMES NEWS**

KATRA: The NSS team at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi (SMVD) University has started a week-long campus plantation drive, aiming to plant 2,500 saplings of various species across the university campus. This initiative, supported by the Project led by Mr. Deeraj, Director of NGO Grow-Trees.com in association with the Wildlife Conservation Fund, Jammu & Kashmir and Eco-Watch, highlights the broader community effort in supporting environmental conservation efforts.

The event started with the welcome address by NSS Programme Coordinator, Dr. Rajiv Kumar, who provided an overview of the plantation drive's objectives.

Dr. Kumar highlighted the significance of this endeavour in fostering ecological balance and community involvement.

The event was graced by Prof. R.K. Mishra, Dean of Student Welfare, Prof. Balbir Singh, Dean, Academic Affairs,

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Neeraj Gupta (JKAS), Finance Officer, Dr. Varun Dutta, NCC Coordinator, and Dr. Kamaldeep, Asst. Prof. SMVDU along with other faculty & staff members of SMVDU.

Their presence reinforced the collective commitment of the university's leadership to this environmental cause. It is pertinent to mention that Ar. Aditya Kumar Singh, faculty member at SMVD University, volunteered to serve as an advisor in designing the campus plantation policy.

tionship, the statement said.

It will help in improving the security of a major defence partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia regions, it said.

The proposed sale will improve India's capability to meet current and future threats by enhancing its capacity to conduct anti-submarine warfare operations from its MH-60R helicopters, it added.

India will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor(s) will be Sparton Corporation, located in De Lon Springs, FL, or Undersea Sensor Systems Inc. (USSSI), located in Columbia City or a combination of both.

There are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale.

The implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional US government or contractor representatives to India.

There will be no adverse impact on US defence readiness as a result of this proposed sale, the statement said.

# KVK Reasi promotes Organic Vegetables Cultivation

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

REASI: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Reasi under the aegis of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu (SKUAST-J) is promoting and educating the farmers on the organic vegetables cultivation in Reasi dist. of J&K to produce the chemical free organic vegetables and to enhance the income and employment of the farmers.

KVK, Reasi is working under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Prof.B.N.Tripathi and able guidance of Director Extension, Prof.Amrish Vaid of SKUAST-J.According to Chief Scientist & Head of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Reasi, Dr. Banarsi Lal, farmers are regularly guided by the KVK on organic formulations such as the use of Panchgavya, beejamrit, jeevamrit,neemastra, fermented butter milk preparations,vermicomposting technology,cow urine etc. by utilizing the farm resources. He



added that the farmers are also guided on the use of Neem Cake, fruitfly traps, Pheromone Traps, sticky traps, Neem Oil, biofertilizers etc. to utilize in the organic vegetables for more yields and returns.He narrated that commercial cultivation of organic vegetables can play the significant role in generating the income and employment among the farmers' of hilly areas.

He informed that organic farming helps to improve the soil fertility and organic farm produce is helpful to improve the health status and create immunity of the human beings.

He expressed that organic farming is helpful in the production of safe and healthy food by reducing the cost of cultivation.

He added that regular technical guidelines on crop rotation, pulses production, protected cultivation, multiple cropping, microbial cultures etc. are also provided to the farmers of the area by the KVK.He stressed on the adoption of cluster approach to produce the organic vegetables.

He further said that KVK is also guiding the farmers on the value addition in vegetables, packaging and marketing of organic vegetables.

# BSF seeks additional manpower for drone-affected Punjab border

**STATE TIMES NEWS**

JALANDHAR/NEW DELHI: The BSF has sought the deployment of an additional battalion to check the onslaught of cross-border drones carrying drugs and ammunition and curb infiltration along the Punjab front of the India-Pakistan border.

The force currently has about 20 battalions to guard the more than 500-kilometre-long front, out of which 18 are "actively deployed" at the border while the rest are mobilised in view of the requirements at the Attari integrated check post in Amritsar and the Kartarpur corridor at Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district.

The drone menace that started around 2019-20 along this front is dominant in the border districts of Amritsar and Tarn Taran. One more Border Security Force (BSF) battalion has been sought to better secure the Punjab border, a senior officer told PTI.

The request is under "active consideration" of the Union home ministry, he said.

Atul Fulzele, inspector general for the BSF's Punjab Frontier, had recently said that all the drugs from across the Pakistan border was coming into Punjab through the air route via drones against the earlier land route.

According to official data, more than 120 drones have been recovered by security agencies at the front this year so far, as compared to 107 such seizures made during the entirety of 2023.

The force, according to officials in Punjab and Delhi, also wants to add more troops to effectively guard the riverine areas along the Punjab front.

As many as 48 culverts are being con-

structed over the Ravi and the Sutlej rivers along the Punjab border, out of which work on 25 is complete.

The culverts are provided with sewage gates and locks and these are being checked regularly by BSF patrols, another officer said.

An additional battalion will bring about an operational strength of around 800-900 personnel to better guard this front, he said.

The BSF also needs more personnel in its intelligence (G branch) setup -- currently operating in a 50-kilometre area from the border.

The deployment of G branch teams along this front has led to the recovery of a number of drones and its droppings (drugs and arms), apart from having "enhanced" liaison with local police and central anti-narcotics agencies to check drug syndicates, the second officer said.

A BSF commander said, "We are getting good response from locals in the border areas who inform us about drone droppings and drug traffickers. Cash rewards have been given to such informers in about 50 cases till now."

The BSF in Punjab has shared contacts of about 75 drug smugglers and suspects with the Punjab Police based on these inputs, he said.

The force is also raising a mounted unit of horse-riding women troops to patrol the front like the male personnel, officials said.

The BSF recently bolstered its strength along the Punjab-Jammu border by deploying more troops in Gurdaspur that abuts Jammu. This was done to check the infiltration of terrorists from the India-Pakistan border to Jammu via Punjab.