

Sunita Williams sets record for total spacewalking time by woman astronaut

WASHINGTON, Jan 31 (PTI)

INDIAN-ORIGIN astronaut Sunita Williams has broken the record for total spacewalking time by a woman by logging 62 hours and 6 minutes of spacewalk. Williams and her colleague Butch Wilmore, who have been stranded on the International Space Station (ISS) since June 2024, conducted a spacewalk on Thursday.

The duo ventured outside the ISS to remove degraded radio communications hardware and collect samples that may show whether microorganisms exist on the exterior of the orbiting laboratory.



Williams sets record by logging 62 hours and 6 minutes of spacewalk

The spacewalk began at 7:43 am Eastern Time (ET) and concluded at 1:09 pm ET, lasting 5 hours and 26 minutes.

It was the ninth spacewalk for Williams and the fifth for Wilmore.

“NASA astronaut Sunita Williams just surpassed former astronaut Peggy Whitson’s total spacewalking time of 60 hours and 21 minutes,” NASA said in a post on X.

She surpassed Whitson’s record for total spacewalking time by a female astronaut. Williams now has 62 hours and 6 minutes of total spacewalk time, fourth on NASA’s all-time list, according to NASA.

In 2012, during a trip to the ISS, Williams became the first person to finish a triathlon in space.

Eco Survey's focus on deregulation, ease of biz heartening: India Inc

NEW DELHI, Jan 31 (PTI)

INDIA Inc on Friday hailed the Economic Survey saying it expects a stable macroeconomic environment and looks forward to rationalisation of the tax structure in the Budget to drive consumption through higher disposable income.

Most industry experts agreed with the survey's economic growth projection for India ranging from 6.3-6.8 per cent for 2025-26, anticipating that Saturday's Union Budget will provide an impetus to boost consumption and investment demand.

Harsha Vardhan Agarwal, President of FICCI, said, "It is heartening to note the emphasis the Economic Survey has placed on 'deregulation' and furthering the agenda of ease of doing business in the country. The survey has highlighted that allowing businesses to focus on their core mission is a sig-



nificant contribution that Governments around the country can make to foster innovation and enhance competitiveness."

He further highlighted that regulatory reforms require active participation of the State Governments, and their role in improving the business climate in the country is becoming increasingly important.

Chandrajit Banerjee, Director

General at CII, stated that the survey makes a comprehensive, in-depth and far-reaching analysis of current economic developments which would be critical for well-informed, evidence-based and futuristic policy-making for "a new India".

"The survey rightly acknowledges the role of the private sector in nation-building and is forthright in its call for lowering the cost of business through deregulation and 'getting out of the way of business' to accelerate growth and create jobs amidst a challenging global environment," he said.

Going forward, CII shared the outlook articulated by the survey on India's growth prospects by projecting a GDP growth rate in the range of 6.3-6.8 per cent for 2025-26 versus 6.4 per cent in the current year on account of fragile external milieu and current state of domestic demand.

'India must pull out all the stops to attract FDI'

NEW DELHI, Jan 31 (PTI)

INDIA must "pull out all the stops" and improve tax certainty and stability to attract more foreign direct investments (FDI) into the country, the Economic Survey said on Friday.

It said that despite the short-term volatility in global markets, triggered by factors such as inflationary pressures, rising interest rates in developed economies, and geopolitical tensions, the long-term outlook for FDI in India remains favourable.

The country's robust economic fundamentals, ongoing structural reforms, and growing consumer market position make it a key destination for foreign investments.

"One, we must pull out all the stops wooing foreign direct investment (FDI) and making itself more attractive for foreign investors. India has been doing so," the survey said.

"However, there is room to

improve tax certainty and tax stability in matters such as APA (Advance Pricing Agreement)," it added.

India has simplified many of its laws, rules and regulations over the years leading to a regime shift in terms of the ease of doing business.

"At the same time, all statutory and regulatory authorities must bear in mind that international investors benchmark countries cross-sectionally and not longitudinally. That will determine the success of the Government's goal to make global companies produce in India for the world, making India a part of the global supply chain," it added.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into India have crossed the USD one trillion milestone in April 2000-September 2024 period, firmly establishing the country's reputation as a safe and key investment destination globally.

Pace of work tripled in Govt's 3rd term: President

NEW DELHI, Jan 31 (PTI)

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu on Friday said the pace of work has tripled in the third term of her Government which has worked with strong determination to lift the economy out of the state of "policy paralysis".

Addressing both the Houses of Parliament assembled together in the Lok Sabha chamber, she said the nation was witnessing major decisions and policies being implemented at an extraordinary speed, with the highest priority given to the poor, the middle class, the youth, women, and farmers.

"My Government is infusing new energy through unprecedented achievements in this
(Contd on page 5)



President Droupadi Murmu addresses the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on the first day of the Budget Session, in New Delhi on Friday. Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla are also seen. (Sansad TV/PTI)

Sonia Gandhi's comments create row

NEW DELHI, Jan 31 (IANS)

THE Budget Session of Parliament began on Friday amidst a fresh controversy following remarks by Congress MP Sonia Gandhi about President
(Contd on page 5)



Rashtrapati Bhawan flays comments

NEW DELHI, Jan 31 (PTI)

CONGRESS leaders' comments on President Droupadi Murmu's address to the Parliament are in poor taste, unfortunate and entirely avoid-
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able, the Rashtrapati Bhawan said on Friday.

In a statement, the President's office said such comments hurt the dignity of the high office and therefore are "unacceptable".
(Contd on page 5)

Economic Survey sees FY26 GDP growth at 6.3-6.8 pc on back of strong fundamentals

■ India a bright spot in global manufacturing despite persistent geo-political tensions: Economic Survey

NEW DELHI, Jan 31 (PTI)

INDIA'S economy is likely to grow at 6.3-6.8 per cent in 2025-26 on the back of strong macro-economic fundamentals, though strategic and prudent policy management will be required to navigate global headwinds, said the Economic Survey on Friday.

The GDP growth rate is estimated to slip to 4-year low of 6.4 per cent in the current financial year ending March 2025, close to its decadal average.

The key pre-Budget document also emphasised that the country needs to grow at 8 per cent for up to two decades to become a developed nation or Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Also, to achieve this growth, the investment rate must rise to



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman poses for group photo with Minister of State Pankaj Chaudhary and the full Budget 2025-26 team after giving final touches to the Union Budget, in New Delhi on Friday.

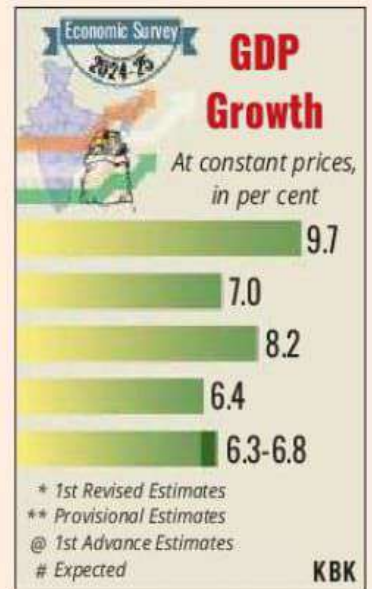
(PTI)

35 per cent of GDP, up from the current 31 per cent, and develop the manufacturing sector further and invest in emerging technologies such as AI, robotics, and biotechnology.

"The fundamentals of the domestic economy remain robust, with a strong external account, calibrated fiscal con-

solidation and stable private consumption. On balance of these considerations, we expect that the growth in FY26 would be between 6.3 and 6.8 per cent," said the survey authored by a team lead by Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran.

Navigating global headwinds will require strategic and pru-



dent policy management and reinforcing the domestic fundamentals, it added.

The survey noted that a steady growth trajectory shapes the global economic outlook for 2024, though regional patterns vary. The near-term global growth is expected to be a shade

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