

**12<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

### **Sirisha Bandla, became the third woman of Indian origin to fly to Space**

When business magnate Richard Branson fulfilled his old dream of flying to space, among the five people who accompanied him on the “magical” trip was a 33-year-old woman with roots in Andhra Pradesh’s Guntur.

Sirisha Bandla, vice president of government affairs and research operations at Branson’s Virgin Galactic, became the third woman of Indian origin — after NASA astronauts Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams — to fly to space.

Branson, Sirisha, and four others — pilots David Mackay and Michael Masucci, Virgin Galactic’s chief astronaut instructor Beth Moses, and lead operations engineer Colin Bennett — travelled to the edge of space before returning to earth aboard the Galactic Unity 22 spacecraft.

### **Billionaire Richard Branson reaches space in his own ship**

Swashbuckling entrepreneur Richard Branson hurtled into space aboard his own winged rocket ship in his boldest adventure yet, beating out fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos. The nearly 71-year-old Branson and five crewmates from his Virgin Galactic space-tourism company reached an altitude of about 53 miles (88 kilometers) over the New Mexico desert enough to experience three to four minutes of weightlessness and see the curvature of the Earth and then safely glided to a runway landing.

### **Samir Banerjee is Jr Wimbledon champ**

Samir Banerjee had just become the new Junior Boys Wimbledon champion.

Banerjee is an American player of Indian origin — his father is from Assam and mother from Andhra Pradesh — and has captured the attention of fans from two nations. But if he wasn’t too conscious of his roots before, he “definitely felt it today,” during the 7-5, 6-3 win over fellow American Victor Lilo.

Incidentally, four Indian players have won Junior Grand Slam titles: Yuki Bhambri (2009 Australian Open), Leander Paes (Wimbledon 1990 and US Open 1991), Ramesh Krishnan (French Open and Wimbledon 1979) and Ramanathan Krishnan (Wimbledon 1954).

### **Lemru Elephant Reserve in Chhattisgarh**

The proposed Lemru Elephant Reserve in Chhattisgarh, in the pipeline for 20 years, has become the subject of yet another controversy. In a letter on June 26, the state Forest and Environment Department asked the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) to make a presentation for decreasing the area of the proposed reserve from 1,995 sq km to 450 sq km.

Why does the government want to reduce the size of the reserve?

The area proposed under the reserve is part of the Hasdeo Aranya forests, a very diverse biozone that is also rich in coal deposits. Of 22 coal blocks in the area, seven have already been allotted with mines running in three, and in the process of being established in the other four. Under the 'No-Go Area' policy from the UPA area, the entire area was considered out of bound for mines, but in 2020, five coal blocks from the region were put on the auction list.

### **Copa America trophy**

After 28 years, Argentina finally broke the spell and lifted the Copa America trophy at the iconic Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. The moment was filled with tonnes of emotions as players and fans rejoiced in the special moment.

It is history for Lionel Messi as he lifts his first senior International trophy. He does it 16 years after making his debut for Argentina. Argentina end a 28-year major title drought as they beat Brazil 1-0 in the Copa America final. Argentina have defeated Brazil in the Copa América final for the first time since 1937, equalling Uruguay's record as the most successful nation in the tournament's history in the process (15 titles). And they did it at the Maracanã.

### **Novak Djokovic wins sixth Wimbledon crown for record-tying 20th Grand Slam**

Novak Djokovic tied Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal by claiming his 20th Grand Slam title, coming back to beat Matteo Berrettini 6-7 (4), 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 in the Wimbledon final.

The No. 1 -ranked Djokovic earned a third consecutive championship at the All England Club and sixth overall.

The 34-year-old from Serbia is now the only man since Rod Laver in 1969 to win the first three major tournaments in a season. He can aim for a calendar-year Grand Slam — something last accomplished by a man when Laver did it 52 years ago — at the U.S. Open, which starts Aug. 30.