

Unity 22 mission

July 6, 2021

In news- Six crew members will be aboard **Virgin Galactic flight 'VSS Unity'**, a suborbital rocket-powered spaceplane which is scheduled to blast off to space on July 11, 2021 from New Mexico.

About the mission-

- Virgin Galactic is set to carry passengers into space on its spaceplane VSS Unity for the first time.
- The Unity 22 mission consists of **two pilots and four mission specialists**, one of whom is Virgin Galactic founder **Sir Richard Branson** and Indian-origin **Sirisha Bandla**.
- As the name suggests, Unity 22 will be the 22nd test flight of VSS Unity, and Virgin Galactic's fourth flight into space.
- The **purpose of the test flight** is to gather data about the spacecraft, including the cabin environment, seat comfort, passenger weightlessness, and the view of the Earth from the passenger area, as well as the efficacy of the Spaceport America training program for its customers.
- Sir Richard will be tasked with evaluating the "private astronaut experience." and will become the **first billionaire to go to space**, beating Amazon's Jeff Bezos' space flight (New Shepard rocket) by nine days.
- Ms. Sirisha Bandla is the Vice President of Government Affairs and Research Operations at Virgin Galactic.
- She was born in Tenali, a city in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh and was raised in Houston, Texas in the United States of America.
- She will be the **fourth Indian to fly into space** and the **second Indian-born woman to fly into space after Kalpana Chawla**.

- The other Indians who went to space include *Rakesh Sharma, Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams.*