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### **1. First moon-landing by private company: What it means for lunar exploration**

#### **Why in news?**

Fifty-two years after the last successful Apollo mission, a US made spacecraft landed on the Moon recently, which also marks the arrival of private space companies on the lunar surface.

Odysseus, a spacecraft built by Intuitive Machines, a ten-year-old company based in Houston, used a Falcon 9 rocket of SpaceX to take off from Earth on February 15 and reach moon on February 23. The spacecraft carried six NASA payloads to the Moon. The lander module of Odysseus, called Nova-C, has become the second one, after Chandrayaan-3 last year, to land in the Moon's south pole region.

#### **New Beginnings**

The landing of Odysseus marks a new beginning in the exploration of the Moon aimed at creating infrastructure and technology ecosystem capable of supporting long-term human presence. This is very different from the moon landings of the 1960s and 1970s by the US and the then Soviet Union, including the human landings by Apollo Missions. Those were landmark scientific events in themselves, but could not be immediately built upon, in the form of exploitation of lunar resources for example, because the associated technologies were yet to be developed.

To put it in perspective, the first moon landing, by Luna 9 of the Soviet Union, happened in 1966 just nine years after the beginning of the space age in 1957 with the launch of Sputnik 1 that was the first spacecraft to reach an orbit around the Earth. The first human landing on the Moon, through the Apollo 11 mission, took place just 12 years after the dawn of space age. The technology ecosystem that could utilise these historic successes for a longer-term exploration and resource utilisation had not been built.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

### **2. RBI to NPCI: Consider Paytm's request for TPAP. What is it, how will it benefit users?**

#### **Why in news?**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked the National Payment Council of India (NPCI) to examine the request of One97 Communications' (OCL), which owns Paytm, to become a Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP) for continued Unified Payments Interface operation of the Paytm application.

A TPAP approval is mandatory to provide UPI-based payment transactions to customers. Currently, all UPI transactions on the Paytm app are being routed through Paytm Payments Bank (PPBL), an associate company of OCL, which is registered as TPAP.

As the RBI has asked the PPBL to shut its operations by March 15, 2024, there will be no TPAP registration for the Paytm app to be able to provide UPI payment services.

### **What is a TPAP?**

A Third-Party Application Provider is an entity that provides the UPI compliant app(s) to the end-user customers to facilitate UPI-based payment transactions. These applications could be mobile wallets, merchant apps, or any other platform that utilises UPI for payments.

NPCI, the umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India, owns and operates the UPI platform.

TPAPs leverage the UPI infrastructure provided by NPCI and work with payment service providers (PSPs) and banks to facilitate transactions. They are responsible for ensuring that their applications adhere to security standards and compliance guidelines set by NPCI.

### **What has RBI said?**

Last month, the RBI barred Paytm Payments Bank from accepting deposits or top-ups in any customer account, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags and NCMC card after February 29, 2024, in the wake of persistent non-compliances. The deadline was later extended by 15 more days to March 15.

As the Paytm Payments Bank cannot accept further credits into its customer accounts and wallets after March 15, the RBI, on February 23, announced some steps to ensure seamless digital payments by UPI customers using '@paytm' handle operated by the PPBL.

It directed NPCI to examine the request of OCL to become a TPAP for the UPI channel for continued UPI operation of the Paytm app.

### **What happens if OCL gets TPAP approval?**

For Paytm, TPAP approval from NPCI is a must to continue to provide UPI-based payment transactions facility to customers.

The RBI said in case NPCI grants TPAP status to OCL, '@paytm' handles will have to be migrated in a seamless manner from Paytm Payments Bank to a set of newly identified banks to avoid any disruption.

OCL will not be allowed to add new users until all the existing users are migrated satisfactorily to a new handle, the regulator said.

### **How many TPAPs are there?**

Currently, there are 22 NPCI-approved 3rd party Unified Payments Interface (UPI) apps that can be used to send and receive money from other UPI users by using UPI IDs. They include

Amazon Pay, Google Pay, Groww, Jupiter Money, Mobikwik, Phonepe, Samsung Pay, TataNeu and Whatsapp.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: The Indian Express

### 3. Signature Bridge in Gujarat

#### Why in news?

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Sudarshan Setu, India's longest cable-stayed bridge, in the Gulf of Kutch. Also known as Signature Bridge, it will link mainland Gujarat with Bet Dwarka island off the Okha coast in Devbhumi Dwarka. Gujarat's first sea link Signature Bridge is technically a sea link, a first for Gujarat.

It connects the Okha town of Devbhumi Dwarka district of mainland Gujarat to Bet Dwarka, an island around 3 km off Okha. Its total length is 4,772m, including a 900-m-long cable-stayed section. The four-lane bridge, constructed for Rs 978 crore, was funded by the Union government.



Sudarshan Setu, also known as the Signature Bridge, is roughly 4.7 km long

#### Connecting Bet Dwarka

After the Union Territory of Diu, located at Una coast in Gir Somnath, Bet Dwarka is the second largest island off the Gujarat coast. While Diu's geographical area is around 40 sq km, Bet Dwarka is spread over 36 sq km.

Bet Dwarka island is part of Okha municipality and has a population of around 10,000. At present, the only means of transport between Bet Dwarka and mainland Gujarat is the ferry boat service running from Dwarka to Okha, the nearest point of the mainland. The Signature Bridge will provide all-weather road connectivity to the island.

**Religious tourism hub**

A major pilgrimage and religious tourism spot, Shree Dwarkadhish Mukhya Mandir, a shrine of Lord Krishna, is located at Bet Dwarka.

The island also has dozens of other Hindu temples, a gurudwara and some mosques. Thousands of pilgrims, mostly Hindus, visit Bet Dwarka for darshan at the Lord Krishna temple. Though some agriculture does happen, fishing is the main source of livelihood on the island, besides tourism activities.

**Unique features**

The bridge is supported by 32 piers, which support seven cable-stayed spans of 900 m length. This is called the navigation section, which will allow the movement of fishing boats to and from the harbour called Dalda Bandar. Besides its 27 m wide carriageway, the bridge has walkways on either side with its pillars decorated with verses of the Bhagavad Gita and images of Krishna. Solar panels form the roof of these walkways.

Relevance: GS Prelims;

Source: The Hindu