



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 19, 2025

DEFENCE

➤ **Bilateral Naval Exercise VARUNA**

- ✓ The 23rd edition of the bilateral naval exercise VARUNA, a symbol of the strong maritime partnership between India and France, is set to take place from March 19 to March 22, 2025.



- ✓ Established in 2001, this annual exercise has become a key platform for enhancing naval interoperability and operational synergy between the two nations.
- ✓ The exercise aims to improve coordination in air defence, anti-submarine warfare, and surface combat, reinforcing the shared commitment to a free, open, and secure maritime environment.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

➤ **NASA Astronauts Return To Earth**

- ✓ Astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore of NASA returned to Earth early this morning aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon Spacecraft.



- ✓ Their SpaceX capsule parachuted into the Gulf of Mexico.
- ✓ A splashdown occurred off the coast of Tallahassee in the Florida Panhandle, ending the nine-month ordeal of the two astronauts.
- ✓ Wilmore and Williams were on the International Space Station since June of last year.
- ✓ The two astronauts ended up spending 286 days in space – 278 days longer than anticipated.

RANKING

➤ India's Free Speech Ranking in Global Index

- ✓ A recent global survey by the U.S.-based think tank The Future of Free Speech ranked India 24th out of 33 countries in its Free Speech Index.



- ✓ The survey, conducted in October 2024, found that although free speech support in India has declined since 2021, a majority of Indians believe it has improved.
- ✓ The report, titled “**Who in the World Supports Free Speech?**”, highlights the gap between public perception and actual protections for free speech in India, alongside broader global trends showing democratic backsliding in various nations.

