

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

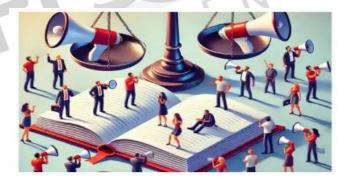
- > NASA Astronauts Return To Earth
- ✓ Astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore of NASA returned to Earth early this morning aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon Spacecraft.



- ✓ 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.



