

1. Shirui Lily Festival Returns to Conflict-Hit Manipur

Why in News?

The Shirui Lily Festival has resumed in Manipur on May 20, 2025, after a two-year break due to ongoing ethnic conflict. This marks the first major tourism event in the state since the violence erupted in May 2023, making security a top priority this year.

What is the Shirui Lily Festival?

Organised by Manipur's Department of Tourism, the festival was first held in 2017. It is one of two major state tourism festivals, the other being the Sangai Festival, named after the state animal.

Held in Ukhrul district, home to the Tangkhul Naga community, the event promotes eco-tourism and highlights the unique Shirui Lily flower, which blooms around this time.



What Makes the Shirui Lily Special?

The Shirui Lily (*Lilium mackliniae*) is a rare and endangered flower, found only in the upper reaches of Shirui Hills (2,673 m) in Ukhrul.

Locals call it 'Kashong Timrawon', linked to local legends. It was officially discovered in 1946 by botanist Frank Kingdon-Ward, who named it after his wife Jean Macklin.

Current Situation and Security Concerns

The festival is happening:

- Two years into the ethnic conflict
- Three months into President's Rule
- Under the supervision of Governor Ajay Bhalla

Though held in Naga territory (considered neutral), concerns remain about travel safety.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Miscellaneous

Source: Indian Express

2. Trump Unveils Ambitious 'Golden Dome' Missile Defense Plan

Introduction

On May 20, former US President Donald Trump announced the design selection for a new missile defense system called the 'Golden Dome', putting General Michael Guetlein of the US Space Force in charge. This futuristic system draws inspiration from Israel's Iron Dome but aims for a much broader and more advanced scope — including space-based weaponry.

A Step Toward 'Space Wars'

The Golden Dome proposes using:

- Space-based sensors and interceptors
- Thousands of small satellites in Earth's orbit
- Ability to neutralize enemy missiles moments after launch

If implemented, this would be the first space-based missile defense system, expanding beyond current uses of space in warfare (mainly reconnaissance and targeting).

Trump compared it to Ronald Reagan's 'Star Wars' initiative from the 1980s, which was ultimately shelved due to technological limitations at the time.



Inspired by Israel's Iron Dome — But Much Bigger

How Iron Dome Works:

- Ground-based system using Tamir interceptor missiles
- Relies on radars to track incoming threats
- Defends against short-range rockets, drones, and missiles
- Ideal for Israel's small, flat terrain

Golden Dome vs. Iron Dome:

- Global-scale defense for the vast US territory
- Designed to intercept long-range ICBMs from rivals like China and Russia
- Space-based tracking and interception capabilities
- Tailored to threats traveling through outer space, such as hypersonic missiles

Challenges and Concerns

Trump estimates the system will cost \$175 billion and be operational by January 2029, but experts and lawmakers are doubtful.

Key Issues

- Experts say it's currently just a concept, not yet feasible
- Initial \$25 billion funding is part of a controversial defense bill facing hurdles in Congress
- Concerns over cost, feasibility, and timeline

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

3. Can a Sitting Judge Face an FIR? Understanding the Veeraswami Case

Introduction

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar recently criticized the Supreme Court's in-house inquiry process and called for an FIR against Justice Yashwant Varma, after unaccounted cash was

found at his residence in March 2025. He also called for a review of the 1991 Supreme Court ruling in the K Veeraswami case, which governs criminal proceedings against sitting judges.

The Case Against Justice Yashwant Varma

- Justice Varma was a Delhi High Court judge at the time of the incident, now transferred to Allahabad High Court.
- An in-house inquiry conducted by the Supreme Court found irregularities and indicted him on May 8.
- The Supreme Court dismissed a plea for an FIR, noting that the inquiry report has been sent to the President and Prime Minister.
- Dhankhar argued that the inquiry lacks constitutional or legal authority and called for criminal action.

Why Judges Are Protected from FIRs

Judicial Independence

- Judges must be free from external pressure or harassment, especially from the executive or political actors.
- Article 124 of the Constitution allows removal of judges only through impeachment, which is a Parliament-led political process.
- In 75 years, no impeachment of a judge has been successful.

In-House Inquiry Mechanism

- Created by the Supreme Court to deal with complaints against judges.
- A panel of judges, appointed by the Chief Justice of India (CJI), reviews allegations.
- The panel's findings can lead to impeachment, but not direct prosecution.
- This process is not legally binding, which critics argue offers too much protection.

The 1991 Veeraswami Judgment: Key Takeaways

Background

- Justice K Veeraswami, former Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, was accused of owning assets beyond his known income.
- The CBI filed an FIR against him before his retirement.
- He challenged the FIR, leading to a constitutional question before the Supreme Court.

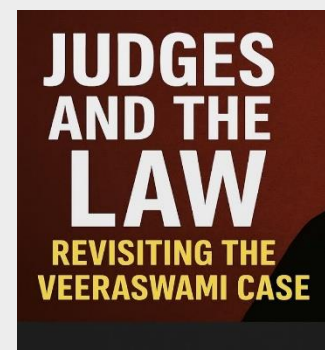
Supreme Court Ruling

- The Court ruled that:
 - A sitting High Court or Supreme Court judge is a "public servant" under the Prevention of Corruption Act.
 - However, no FIR or prosecution can be initiated without prior approval from the CJI.
- This ruling ensures that judges are not prosecuted arbitrarily or under political pressure.

Why the CJI's Sanction is Required

- The Court clarified that judges are not employees of the President.
- The CJI's approval ensures that the executive cannot misuse power to target judges.

Has the Rule Been Used Since Then?



Yes, but very rarely:

- In 2019, then CJI Ranjan Gogoi allowed the CBI to file an FIR against Justice S N Shukla of the Allahabad High Court in a corruption case.
- Justice Shukla was previously recommended for impeachment by CJI Dipak Misra, but no action was taken by the government.

Current Debate: Impunity vs. Accountability

- Critics like Dhankhar say the Veeraswami ruling shields judges from prosecution, even in serious cases.
- Supporters argue it's essential to protect the independence of the judiciary.
- Calls to revisit the ruling reflect growing concerns about judicial accountability in India.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

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