



The EIKHOIGI Daily

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DAY 2

Friday, 07 February 2025

EIFF Opening Day Lights Up Sombre Imphal





From months of unrest, Manipur seeks to transition into film hub as EIIFF kicks off

By DONALD SAIREM

Manipur today witnessed an optimistic transition as hundreds, including dozens from across the country and beyond, came together to celebrate the art of cinema in the 2nd edition of the Eikhoigi Imphal International Film Festival (EIIFF), 2025, which kicked off Thursday.

The inaugural function of the biggest international film festival in India's northeast held at the City Convention Centre was marked by vibrant cultural performances re-emphasising the fact that Manipur is much beyond the unrest and violence which often overshadowed the land.

The doyen of Manipuri Cinema and acclaimed filmmaker Aribam Syam Sharma recounted the horrors of the Battle of Imphal between the Allied Forces and the Japanese in the Second World War.

The octogenarian filmmaker said that whenever we say Imphal, people of his generation are reminded of the bombings and the horror it brought to the people.

Imphal became prominent as the last



battleground between Allied Forces and the Japanese forces. That difficult period where many people lost their near and dear

ones comes to mind. But as we celebrate the EIIFF 2025 today, we envision another type of Imphal. Perhaps, we can hope that this festival will usher in peace in this very disturbed land, he said.

He also pointed out how he couldn't sleep the previous night, contemplating whether it is the right time for organising a film festival. There might be people who say it is not the right time. But this type of festival is very much necessary as this will give a chance to young filmmakers to grow in their fields.

I am very happy that Manipur is hosting this festival and many delegates from outside Manipur are also taking part, he said.

Further shedding light on how this type of small international festival is very important, he said that in big festivals, we get lost whereas in small film festivals there is room for establishing connections and exchanging of ideas among the filmmaking community.

The restored version of Aribam Syam Sharma's timeless classic Ishanou (The Chosen One) was the opening film of the festival and

he expressed his delight that with the restoration, Ishanou has been reborn.

Information and Public Relations minister Dr. Sapam Ranjan while speaking as the chief guest, expressed his firm belief that films have the potential to bring positive changes as they have profound impact on the society, culture and the community.

He also said that it will be a boon for film lovers if timeless classic films can be restored and digitised, thereby focusing on the importance of film preservation.

Manipur Chief Secretary, who is also the Chairman of the festival organising committee, PK Singh assured to make all possible efforts from his side to ensure that the festival is being organised more grandly from the next edition onwards.

Noting that there are several schemes under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for assisting in organising such festivals, he stated that the organising committee plans to seek the funding and make the festival bigger by ensuring participation of international guests.

Meanwhile, Festival Director and MSFDS Secretary Sunzu Bachaspatimayum said that at a time when there exists an apprehension about visiting Manipur, the festival organisers are overwhelmed by the solidarity shown by creative minds from across the country and beyond.

The solidarity reinforced the belief that cinema has the power to unite, to heal, and to inspire. This festival is a celebration of inclusivity and the shared love for the art of motion-picture storytelling, offering a space



to reconcile, to dream, and to build a hopeful future together, he said.

Over the next three days, EIIFF 2025 promises an enriching experience with a carefully curated selection of films—shorts, documentaries, and fiction—alongside industry engagements designed to elevate the cinematic landscape and nurture fresh talent. Beyond screenings, there is a robust lineup of Masterclasses, Cine Talks, and Panel Discussions that have already begun to spark critical conversations.

For the first time in Northeast India, EIIFF introduces two Pitch Sessions where emerging talents will present their fiction and

nonfiction projects to industry professionals, competing for funding opportunities amounting to Rs. 8 Lakhs. These pitches mark the culmination of rigorous project development mentorship labs, where eight nonfiction and five fiction projects have been nurtured by mentors who have urged filmmakers to discover and refine their unique cinematic languages.

To the esteemed guests from outside Manipur, the festival director hoped that they would take not just stories from the films but also the warmth of Manipuri hospitality, the spirit of inclusivity, and the breathtaking beauty of the land. ■



Esteemed guests arrive at the opening ceremony.



Challenges of Manipuri Cinema: Struggles of Cine Exhibitors

By HEIRANGKHONGJAM BHAVAN

The Manipuri film industry is grappling with a crisis. A combination of factors, including extortion threats, censorship by certain groups, repetitive storylines that fail to reflect the region's cultural narratives, and inadequate cinema hall infrastructure, has led to a steady decline in cinema-goers. Moreover, the impact of evolving digital technologies and law and order issues further contribute to the shrinking audience numbers in Manipur's cinema halls.

A panel discussion titled 'Challenges Faced by Manipuri Cine Exhibitors' (Manipuri Cine Exhibitors Singna Mayoknariba Cheitheng) was held at the City Convention Centre, Palace Compound, Imphal. The session featured notable voices from the industry, including Laishram Sanatomba, Proprietor of Friends' Talkies, Paona Bazar, Imphal; Haojam Shantiprava Devi, Proprietor of Shanti Cinema Hall, Bishnupur; and Laimayum Surjakanta Sharma, Chairperson of Film Forum Manipur. The discussion was moderated by journalist Lalpal Wahengbam.



Cinema as More Than Just Entertainment

Laishram Sanatomba emphasised that cinema is often reduced to mere entertainment, which makes it vulnerable to bans by various groups. However, he asserted that cinema halls are more than just places for recreation—they are crucial platforms for education, cultural preservation, and media-driven awareness. He noted that his family's Friends' Talkies has been running since the 1930s, witnessing both the golden age and the decline of cinema in Manipur.

Sanatomba highlighted that the ban on Hindi films imposed by certain groups has



significantly impacted cinema hall businesses. However, he pointed out the irony that while the ban affects only the halls, the content remains widely accessible through television and mobile streaming platforms, rendering the restrictions ineffective.

Haojam Shantiprava Devi attributed the decline of traditional cinema halls to the rise of digital platforms, including OTT services, which provide audiences with convenient access to entertainment from the comfort of their homes. Sanatomba, however, disagreed with this view.

He argued that people still crave quality films, but Manipuri cinema struggles due to weak editing and direction. Citing the example of Netflix owning physical cinema halls in Singapore, he suggested that the survival of theaters depends on the production of well-crafted films rather than competing with digital platforms. Haojam Shantiprava also stated that the screening of films in open-air spaces, such as playgrounds, is one of the factors contributing to the decline of cinema hall businesses. Although there is a consensus among cinema proprietors, directors, and producers that film screenings within a 3-kilometer radius of a cinema hall are prohibited, such screenings continue to take place in many areas.

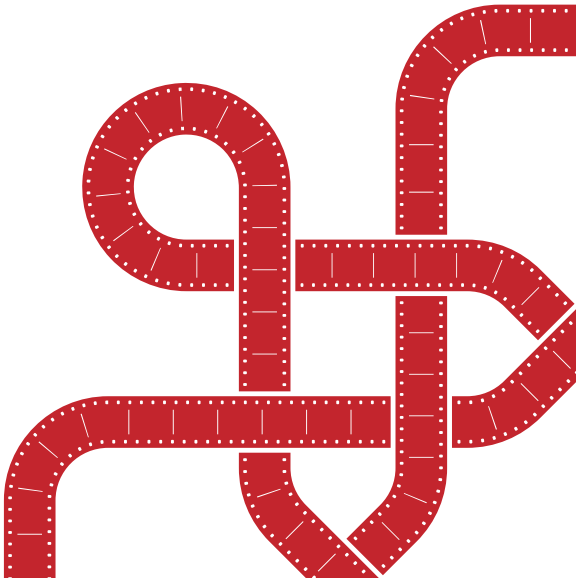
The Rise and Fall of Manipuri Cinema

Laimayum Surjakanta Sharma provided a historical perspective, recalling the vibrant cinema culture when Matamgi Manipur, the first Manipuri film, was released on April 9, 1972. At the time, there were no censorship restrictions or bans, and regional films from Bengal, Bhojpuri industries were regularly screened. Additionally, news segments from the Film News Division were broadcasted in theaters

However, the decline of cinema halls began in the 1990s with the advent of television, followed by the rise of mobile internet, which further eroded audience engagement. Surjakanta also pointed out that the lack of originality in Manipuri cinema's storylines has led to audience disengagement. He noted that in 2024 alone, despite the ongoing crisis in the state, 30 Manipuri films were released, but only three managed to attract a significant audience.

A Call for Artistic Foundations

The panellists concluded that for Manipuri cinema to thrive, filmmakers and artists must focus on originality, technical quality, and strong cultural narratives. Many aspiring actors and directors transition from social media reels to cinema without proper artistic training, resulting in a lack of creativity and depth in storytelling. The discussion underscored the urgent need for a solid artistic foundation to elevate Manipuri cinema to greater heights. As the industry navigates these challenges, stakeholders must come together to reinvent Manipuri cinema, ensuring it retains its cultural significance while adapting to changing audience preferences and technological advancements. ■



Manipuri Actors Want to Break Monotony

By **ARIBAM BISHWAJIT**

Film actors play a pivotal role in shaping narratives, influencing society, and driving change through their performances. Their ability to convey powerful messages on screen goes beyond entertainment. It sparks discourse and shapes cultural perspectives across generations.

As the film industry evolves, it is essential to explore how Manipuri actors can refine their craft and bring more depth and diversity to their storytelling to elevate Manipuri cinema to a world-class level.

Intending to make Manipuri films world-class through the growth of its actors, the Eikhoigi Imphal International Film Festival (EIIFF) hosted a panel discussion featuring renowned Manipuri actors Bala Hijam, Amar Mayanglambam, and Soma Laishram. Titled 'Cinemagi Honglakliba Saklon Amadi Manipuri Actors,' the discussion, hosted by renowned journalist Sonia Sorensangbam examined the changing landscape of cinema and the evolving role of Manipuri actors in strengthening the industry and competing on a global stage. It mainly focused on the actors' experiences, the roles they have portrayed, and the challenges they believe need to be addressed to elevate Manipuri cinema.

Acclaimed actor Bala Hijam expressed that despite her extensive experience in Manipuri cinema, she finds the storytelling and filmmaking process somewhat repetitive and lacking novelty.

"The characters and stories feel repetitive, following the same trends and themes. It seems like we lack vision. I wasn't aware of this before, but my experience has taught me a lot. When I sought opinions from national award-winning directors, I learned even more."

The popular actor of Manipuri cinema continued, "We don't get the opportunity to step out of this monotonous zone. Due to various restrictions, we cannot fully express ourselves, and the same applies to screenwriters. However, thanks to the love and support of the people, I am still part of the film industry".

Actor Amar Mayanglambam, whose film Langdai Ama will be screened at the festival,



spoke about his acting journey, transitioning from an assistant to renowned directors such as Aribam Syam Sharma. He emphasised, "Many filmmakers have produced outstanding films, and I am simply following in their footsteps. I am proud to call them our torchbearers in Manipuri cinema. Just like them, I aspire to contribute my best to Manipuri cinema so that future actors can look up to me as a senior in this filmmaking platform in Manipur."

Amar shared his journey, highlighting his dedication to making a meaningful impact on society through his work as an actor. He continues to hone his craft and strongly believes in the transformative power of cinema.

The talented actor Soma Laishram shared her insights, drawing attention to the significant differences between filmmaking in major industries outside Manipur and their own.

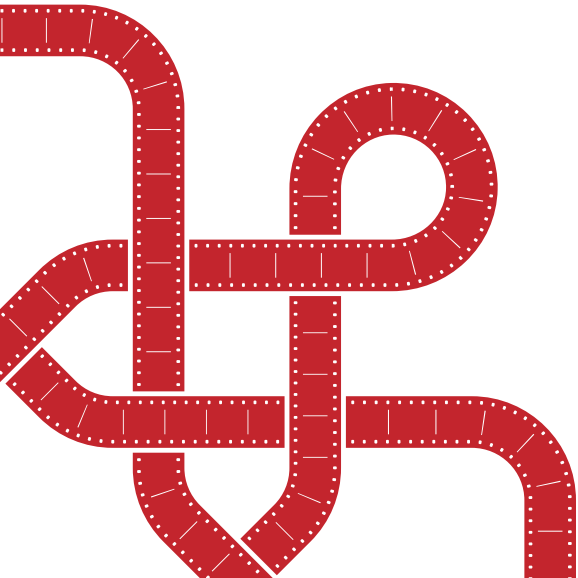
She said, "In Manipuri cinema, we often take on various roles in multiple films, with shooting done one at a time for all the projects we're involved in throughout the year. The release date is set first, and then

we work on the films. This contrasts with the approach outside the state, where filmmakers focus on one project at a time, taking much longer to complete it. We don't have that luxury."

Elaborating on the nature of storytelling, she added, "Many of my roles have centered around family dramas, love stories, and issues like violence, especially violence against women. In our industry, we haven't been able to portray characters from diverse walks of life.

"We must strive to offer new, enriching experiences to the audience. Rather than adhering to repetitive storylines, we need to create unique, impactful films with fresh, meaningful narratives."

To create meaningful films, actors must have the audacity to choose and portray original stories that break away from the repetitive patterns of the past. The discussion emphasised the importance of actors in selecting unique roles and embracing fresh narratives, as this will play a crucial role in elevating Manipuri cinema to new heights. ■



Words From Our Guests

The 2nd edition of EIIFF will reignite and elevate Manipur's film industry, rekindling passion and talent after a long lull. It will not only revive but surpass past cinematic experiences, inspiring a new era.

Jenny Khurai, Makeup Artist & Film Producer

HAM Radio – A Life Saving Medium

By **MAIBAM SONALEE & PHURAILATPAM KENNY**

Film festival is not just a platform of fun and entertainment but also a right place to harness knowledge and new ideas. This is what the much-awaited 2nd EIIFF exemplify through the talks, discussions and workshop held on diverse topics, even unrelated to film, as a part of the event.

Dissemination of valuable information is what really the film fraternity always strike in the mind. Totally diverting from the track of film talks, the organising team of EIIFF gives you different tastes with the discussion of "HAM Radio". The discussion was held some hours ahead of the grand opening of the 2nd EIIFF, during a series of cine talks supplementing the essence of the event.

With much enthusiasm to promote HAM Radio in Manipur, Sukamal Deb, who is presently associated with Tripura HAM Radio Club, detailed about HAM Radio also known as Amateur Radio, highlighting it as an effective tool in rendering public service communication.

Amateur Radio, commonly known as HAM radio, is a non-commercial communication service operated by licensed individuals for self-learning, experimentation, and emergency communication. In India, it is regulated by the WPC – DoT under the government, while globally, it falls under the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Hertz, Armstrong, and Marconi were pioneers in wireless communication, laying the foundation for HAM radio's growth, including advancements in digital and satellite communications.

Sukamal Deb, a retired police communication officer of Tripura, informed that HAM radio communicates through satellite and operates without internet. North East region lies in a terrain region where communication service is often disrupted, it will be a boon if HAM Radio is popularised.

"As the north-east region is prone to natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, and road accidents, HAM Radio can be a wonderful medium to take precautionary measures and



Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons, Author: Venglin

save many lives. It can handle messages for all kinds of emergencies, including cyclones, earthquakes, floods, rail and road and air accidents," said Sukamal, who is an expert in HF, VHF, UHF and Data Network.

Encouraging many participants to become a HAM Radio operator, he said that anyone above 12 years of age can run the radio by getting a licence, which will be received only after passing an exam called Amateur Station Operator Certificates (AOC). HAM radio service is authorised by the Wireless Planning and Coordination Wing of the Department of Telecommunication. The cost of starting a HAM Radio is just Rs 1100. The validity of the licence is 20 years.

Sukamal, who came all the way from Tripura to promote the importance of Amateur Radio, shared effective functioning of HAM Radio in Tripura, recalling the incident of relief handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said, "During disasters, when cellular and internet services fail, HAM radio provides reliable communication. Operators have assisted in major calamities such as the Gujarat

earthquake in 2001, the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the 2013 Uttarakhand floods, the Hudhud Cyclone in 2014, and the 2020 Assam floods."

In India, Amateur Radio has operated since the 1920s, but it was banned in the north-east region till 2016. However, Tripura HAM Radio Club started in 2018. Gradually gaining its popularity in Tripura, around 500 HAM licenses were issued in the last four years, he informed, while expressing his interest to start functioning HAM radio in Manipur as well.

Screening a short video on Tripura HAM Radio Club to gain the attention of the participants, Sukamal Deb urged young people to take the initiative of operating Amateur Radio and extend their volunteer service.

The discussion was interactive in nature, many participants raised questions to clear their doubts. Many of them showed their curiosity about starting HAM radio. ■



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Delhi Tourism

Happening Today

Screenings

DAY 2 07 FRIDAY						
PALACE AUDI	10:00 AM	11:30 AM	12:30 PM	2:45 PM	4:40 PM	6:30 PM
	MA - Cry of Silence DIR The Maw Naing MYANMAR	Teere Bendho Na (Unanchored) DIR Niranjana Kujur INDIA	Turtle Walker DIR Taira Malaney INDIA	Hangman DIR Vihaan V INDIA	Against the Tide DIR Sarvnik Kaur INDIA	Indian Women Atlas DIR Sunil Dhankher INDIA
	IC:F FICTION 74'	EM FICTION 36'	IC:NF NON-FICTION 75'	IC:F FICTION 79'	IC:NF NON-FICTION 97'	NEC ANIMATION 10'
TANTHAPOLIS	10:00 AM	11:20 AM	1:15 PM	3:30 PM	5:30 PM	
	Putulnama (Dolls Don't Die) DIR Ranajit Ray INDIA	In God We Trust DIR Uma Vangal INDIA	Sunita DIR Ajit Yumnam INDIA	The Secrets of Radha DIR Subarna Thapa NEPAL	Manikbabur Megh DIR Abhinandan Banerjee INDIA	
	WL NON-FICTION 70'	EM NON-FICTION 63'	MM FICTION 107'	EM FICTION 95'	EM FICTION 98'	
KUMECs	10:00 AM	11:40 AM	4:00 PM	4:30 PM	5:00 PM	
	Cu Li Never Cries DIR Pham Ngoc Lan VIETNAM	No Winter Holidays DIR Rajan Kathet, Sunil Pandey NEPAL	Aaini Onnai (Mother's Affection) DIR Bishal Swargiary INDIA	Ade (On A Sunday) DIR Theja Rio INDIA	Karken DIR Nending Loder INDIA	
	IC:F FICTION 93'	IC:NF NON-FICTION 79'	NEC NON-FICTION 20'	NEC FICTION 17'	NEC FICTION 92'	
CHANDRAKRITI AUDI	10:00 AM	11:40 AM	2:15 PM	4:00 PM	4:30 PM	
	And, Towards Happy Alleys DIR Sreemoyee Singh IRAN	A Road To A Village DIR Nabin Subba NEPAL	Langdai Ama DIR Binoranjana Oinam INDIA	An Unknown Summer DIR Bhasker Jyoti Das INDIA	Sanakeithel DIR M.A. Singh INDIA	
	IC:NF NON-FICTION 75'	IC:F FICTION 96'	MM FICTION 85'	IC:NF NON-FICTION 24'	RM FICTION 120'	

Events

Day 2 7 Feb	10:30 AM - 11:30 AM	11:45 AM - 12:45 PM		1:30 PM - 2:30 PM	2:45 PM - 3:45 PM
	MASTERCLASS The Fundamentals of Direction Prof. Shyamal Sengupta	CINE TALKS Digital Transformation & Film Consumption Subimal Bhattacharjee	Screening of Sean McAllister's film MSFDS Preview Theatre	MASTERCLASS Filming Intimate Documentary (Online) Sean McAllister	PANEL DISCUSSION Stories From the Fringe

Evening Performances

DAY 2 07 FRIDAY	EIKHOIGI LEGACY
STARTS AT 4:00 PM	
THANG TA DHON CHOLOM THANG LEITENG	
GURU REWBEN MASHANGVA L. BEDABATI DEVI SORRI SENJAM	



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR



Chief
Electoral
Officer
Manipur



Words From Our Guests

I believe this international film festival will open countless doors, especially for young talents fresh from their studies in film and acting. It's a stage where dreams take flight, creativity finds its voice, and the future of cinema begins its journey.

Denny Likmabam, Actor



A cinegoer looks for her seat during the screening of Ishanou at Tanthapolis.



Words From Our Guests

ElIFF is more than a celebration of film—it's a gateway to global cinema, seen through the lenses of acclaimed filmmakers. It fosters cultural exchange, enriches cinematic experiences, and connects storytellers across borders.

Soma Laishram, Actor



A film festival like this shines a light on the hidden gems of my state, a land rich in art and culture. This film festival will unveil untapped talents—singers, artists, filmmakers, scriptwriters—all the creative forces that bring cinema to life.

Bala Hijam, Actor

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