

On March 9th, 2023, the Mass Media Department, St. Anthony's College, and the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at NEHU organised a summit to discuss the Meghalaya State Film Policy. Filmmakers, film academicians, film enthusiasts, film critics, and other stakeholders gathered at St. Anthony's College to engage in dialogue and exchange ideas regarding the policy. During the summit, numerous ideas and viewpoints were shared, discussed, and refined, ultimately resulting in the creation of a draft policy.

The Meghalaya State Film Policy is a proposed policy document aimed at developing the state of Meghalaya as a significant centre for film production. The policy aims to promote and publicise the state's cultural, mythological, and historical heritage, provide opportunities for the development of acting and filmmaking talent, job creation, attract additional investment, and provide affordable entertainment to the people of the state and country. The policy proposes to declare Meghalaya Films as an industry and define Meghalaya Cinema as films released in any part of the state and produced in any ethnic language of Meghalaya. This policy is an essential step towards recognising the potential of the state's film industry and fostering its growth as a creative economy.

We have made this draft policy by incorporating all of the points raised and discussed during the summit. The draft policy is open for public comments and suggestions. We encourage all stakeholders to read through it, provide critiques, and contribute additional ideas by emailing us at massmedia@anthonys.ac.in

MEGHALAYA STATE FILM POLICY DRAFT

1. Preface

The Meghalaya Film Scene offers a very humble story of its beginnings. Way back in the late 70s and the beginning of the 80s when the State had not yet released its first film, Hindi and English films were in a high demand and they were shown at cinema halls in Shillong and after that in Jowai and Byrnihat.

Films which were in the Khasi Language was started in 1981 onwards, they were filmed with the help of movie camera which is capable of 8mm, 16mm & 35mm film. Without any training whatsoever, Dr Hamlet Bareh, a professor of History in NEHU, directed and release the first Khasi film “**Ka Synjuk Ri Ki Laiphew Syiem-** in 1981 and it was shot in 16 mm. It was an attempt by Bareh to record the first wave of Anglo Khasi resistance.

Then came the film *I Mei Jong Nga* in 1983 by B.C Jyrwa, it was filmed by the 8mm Video Camera of Mr. Philip from Mawlai and the theme song (*Ko Mei Jong Nga*) of this film was sang by Rana Kharkongor, it was released publicly with the projector to the screen, the film reel for this project was exported from Bombay. Later *Manik Raitong* in 1984 (Shot in 35mm) directed by Ardhendu Bhattacharya and produced by Rishan Rapsang was a high budget film which was released in 1984 became the first completely coloured film in Khasi language. *Manik Raitong* was about 149 min in duration. It was made under the banner of Neo Cine Production. It was released in cinema hall and had achieved the National award, it won the Indian Panorama 1984 Award (from amongst 21 Indian Feature Films). The music for the film

was composed by a Japanese musician Kazu Matsui. Skendrowell Syiemlieh rendered his voice for Manik Raitong and in 1991 he received the 'U Tirot Sing Award'. The lead actors in the film were William Rynjah, Sheba Diengdoh, Gilbert Synnah, Veronica Nongbet, Benjamin Kharkongor, Diamond Mawthoh and an Assamese female actor, Chetana Das. This became a landmark film because it catapulted Khasi films to the rest of the country and after its release there was no turning back. Khasi films then saw a mushrooming of film talents and many films after the release of *Manik Raitong* got released in VHS Format. The late 80s and 90s was a period which saw the rise of film makers like Kitbor W. Nongrum with his film like *Ka Jingieid* and Bah Rana Kharkongor with a musical film like *Ka Jingkieng Ksiar*.

Today the State is seeing a steady growth in film production. It is churning out many award winning films like *Ri - Homeland of Uncertainty*, *Oonatah* and *Īewduh*. Commercial filmmakers are steadily releasing films. A platform of filmmakers of the State known as Meghalaya Filmmakers Association was established in 2010 with Commander Shangpliang as its President. The Meghalaya Film scene further got a strong impetus when in 2013 the 1st Khasi Film Award was organised where two films – *Dathehlut* and *Aiti* received the Best Film award. There were also awards which recognised other aspect of filmmaking like best cinematography, best sound, etc.

In the midst of this prolific growth of films in Meghalaya and to induce domestic structure of cinema in the State by recognizing it as a creative economy, a new chapter in the history of films in Meghalaya is required. That chapter is in the formulation of a State Film Policy.

2. Objectives

- a. To develop the state of Meghalaya as an important centre for the production of films.
- b. To promote and publicise the cultural, mythological and historical heritage and the rich traditions of the state, in the country as well as in other parts of the world.
- c. To provide opportunities for development of acting and film making talent in the state.
- d. To provide opportunities for job creation in the state.
- e. To provide means for attracting additional investment in the state through film industry.
- f. To provide healthy and relatively inexpensive entertainment to the people of the state as well as the country.

3. Title

- a) This may be called the Meghalaya Film Policy 2023
- b) It shall come into force from the publication in the official Gazette.

4. Definition

- a) The definition of cinema will be the same as laid down in the Indian Cinematography Act.

- b) Meghalaya Cinema means films released in any part of the State and produced in any ethnic languages of Meghalaya.

5 . Industry Status

- a) The Government of India has already decided to grant recognition to film sector as an 'industry'. Meghalaya Film Industry is growing by leaps and bounds and releasing a good 50 local films per year. It is also boosting other sectors like music production, makeup and costumes sector, performing arts sectors like dancing, singing, stunts artists etc. it is employing directly and indirectly about 10,000 persons. It, therefore, qualifies to be recognised as an industry as part of cultural industrialisation. Hence the State government shall strive to declare Meghalaya Films as an industry to not only grant recognition to this sector but also to enable the industry to tap funding and support from the financial institutions under the industrial policy of the State.

6. Allotment of a Line Government Department

- a) Till date Films has not been allotted a government department who will be in charge of it. Filmmakers are unsure of approaching the Arts and Culture department or the Information and Public Relation Department for support, assistance, collaborations and permissions with regard to all aspects of filmmaking in the State. The government once and for all need to identify this Department. If this is done then a single window mechanism can be put in place where filmmakers can approach for all their needs to create their craft especially in terms of obtaining permissions.

7. Infrastructure- Cinema Halls

- a) Infrastructure of specific type is required for films. The state government will promote creation of such type of infrastructure in private and joint sectors.
- b) The government will create and boost Infrastructure like studios and processing labs for shooting and film production.
- c) Currently we have only two Cinema halls. That is Bijou cinema and Anjalee Galleria and both are located in Shillong and they are both in the private sector. The government will create more Cinema halls for film screening in all the Districts of the State and these must be equipped with State of the art facilities like the following:
 - i. Air conditioning/air cooling
 - ii. Strong generator set
 - iii. Modern sound system
 - iv. Comfortable seat seats
 - v. Kiosk for sale of food
 - vi. Digital projection system
 - vii. Decent ticket counters
- d) An integrated incentive scheme be made for restarting closed cinema halls, reconstructing/ remodelling the operational cinema halls, and open new cinema halls. The scheme should have provisions for revival of closed cinema halls, and also upgrading of the existing cinema halls. For building of cinema halls like multiplexes

in the Private sector, the government will set up incentive scheme for construction of cinema halls of small capacity equipped with commercial complex and the latest facilities in place of the closed or already operational cinema halls

- e) Some relaxation be given for the construction of cinema halls in multiplexes under the Meghalaya Building Bye-Laws to allow for a hall to be constructed on the top floor in addition to the allowed number of floors as cinema halls require a bigger dimension than the regular size floors.

8. Regulation of Ticket Sales

- a) Currently there is no regulation of the sales of tickets and Film makers are left at the mercy of Cinema hall owners who charges random and fluctuated film screening rates. The government must pass an official order whereby a fixed screening rate will be charged from local film makers by Cinema hall owners. The box office share rate as below be followed throughout Meghalaya:
 - i. Producer's share: 60%
 - ii. Exhibitor's share: 40%
- b) The decision of the ticket rate be left to the individual exhibitors and not be controlled by the state Government.

9. Regulation of Film Distribution

- a) Currently, there is no legitimate Film distributor/s in the State. The government will recognise film distributors by issuing them an official licence which they have to duly apply.

10. Meghalaya Film Development Society (MFDS)

- a) The State government will set up a non-profit institute and it shall be known as Meghalaya Film Development Society (MFDS) to be headed by a board of Directors. The purpose of the MFDC is to encourage good cinema movement in the State. The primary goal of the MFDC is to plan, promote and organize an integrated and efficient development of films in the state and to foster excellence in cinema. This corporation will be responsible for the following:
 - i. Developing of talent and facilitating the growth of the State's cinema through productions and co-productions, script development and need based workshops, seminars, and conferences.
 - ii. Organisation of Meghalaya Film Festival in the state
 - iii. Keep a stock of the latest film equipment to be hired by filmmakers at nominal rate.
 - iv. Form an Artist Bank which will keep a register of Film Studios/Companies, Producers, Directors, Actors, Cinematographers, Editors, and other fields of filmmaking.
 - v. Meghalaya AV Archive: An AV archive for documentation of film prints, digital film formats, photographs , scripts, posters , brochures, press cuttings, film

journals, memoirs, equipment, etc and matters related to various activities of the cinema of the state shall be established and maintained by MFDS.

- vi. Facilitate the film certification process with collaboration with the CBFC, Guwahati.
- vii. Promotion of the culture of the state through cinema
- viii. Organising of weekly screenings of award winnings films of world cinema and film classics.
- ix. Set up Film Clubs in educational institutions in the state to organise film screenings and interactions with film culture.
- x. MFDS will look after the implementation and timely amendments to the Meghalaya State Film Policy.
- xi. Screen short educational films made in Meghalaya in cinema halls.
- xii. The Meghalaya State Film Society would include following office-bearers:—
 1. Director of Dept. of IPR Chairman
 2. Director Doordarshan, Shillong Member
 3. Director AIR, Shillong Member
 4. Director of Dept Arts & Culture, Shillong Member
 5. Director of Dept of Tourism, Shillong Member
 6. Director of Dept of Planning, Shillong Member
 7. Four nominated member from the field of films and performance arts and journalism.

11. Film Cities and Film Studio

- a) The state government will support establishment of film cities by providing land at industrial rates and also assist for providing active support for development of infrastructure. The government will also assist in establishing a police station in the film city for the purpose of providing security. Establishing of police station, fire station, roads and physical infrastructure, development of external drainage etc in the film city will also be taken care of by the state government.
- b) An expert agency will be engaged to study the feasibility for the utilisation of existing of resources in the state for production and shooting of films. The main objective of the study to be undertaken by the said expert agency will be to evaluate the opportunities available in the private sector for development of new film cities and film labs
- c) Until this fully functional film city is established in the state, the government will make sure that there will be the establishment of film studios and film labs in the State. These Studios and Labs will be promoted by the state government. For establishment of these studios and labs, the state government institution will not only provide credit facilities, but also the regional films will be linked with the scheme of providing subsidy under this film policy, so that the studios/ labs situated in the state can be benefitted. These studios will be equipped with shooting and post production equipment's to support the filmmakers. These in turn can be hired out to the filmmakers.

12. Lodging facilities for Film Units

- a) The units doing outdoor shooting in the state will be given 25 percent concession in room rent on their stay in hotels/motels of the Meghalaya State Tourism Development Corporation, while their stay in guest houses/rest houses of the PWD, Forest Department, Irrigation Department and Government Estate Department will be on regular payment basis.

13. Meghalaya State Film and Television Institute

- a) In order to encourage talented people and to hone their skills the government will set up a State film and television institute by following the model of the Film and television institute of India (FTII) located at Pune. It can also coordinate with the FTII to set up a branch in the state.
- b) Until such an Institute is set up, the students of the state receiving training at the Indian Film and Television Institute, Pune and the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata will be sanctioned a scholarship of Rs. 25,000 per annum. The maximum number for scholarship for both the institute will be 10 students each.

14 Awards

- a) The State Government would institute an Annual Film Award to honour persons related with top quality film making. The award must be named as the 'Synjuk Ri Award' after the first Khasi feature film.

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