

Report on

Makuiluangdi Festival 2025 – Malangwangbo: Return of the Native

Submitted to North Eastern Council (NEC)

By

Luangdimai Citizens Forum under the aegis of *Luangdimai Bamdua*

10.00 lakhs NEC funding



Makuiluangdi Festival 2025 was celebrated at Makuiluangdi Village, the ancestral village of the Zeliangrong people—also known as the Luangdimai at Senapati District, Manipur from 18th-21st November 2025. The second edition of Makuiluangdi Festival 2025 was organised by Luangdimai Citizens Forum (LCF) under the aegis of *Luangdimai Bamdua* in collaboration with Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) with an evocative theme, “Malanwangbo” meaning “Return of the Native”, symbolizing the homecoming of Luangdimai people from across regions to their ancestral homeland for a grand celebration of heritage, community, and unity.

The festival re-enacted Naga dispersal from Makhel by featuring a symbolic procession co-hosted by the Mao Council and LCF on 18th November 2025. Following this, as a part of the journey to rediscover the history and lineage of the Luangdimai (Zeliangrong)a, an Ultra Trail Expedition - comprising Trail Run, Cycling, Motorbiking, and Car Rally—from Makhel the Naga peoples’ ancestral home to Makuiluangdi Village Hallowed Ground (present Senapati District of Manipur) was organised. The expedition was flagged off by the village authority of Makhel and President, Mao Council with the chief of Makhel lighting a torch for the expedition team. The expedition route marks the legendary path where the ancestors are believed to have traversed, took shelter and first settled and then finally established a Luangdimai (Zeliangrong) civilization at Makuiluangdi. This expedition was a tribute to ancestral memory and a celebration of adventure, fitness, fellowship, and cultural pride among participants and enthusiasts.

The trail run team comprised of Mr. Thaithuilung Pamei, (IAS), Commissioner of Horticulture and Agriculture, (Govt. of Manipur) Mr. Aaron Pamei, Director, Personnel, Naval Headquarter, Ministry of Defence, (GoI); Dr. Achingliu Kamei, and Ms. Kiudamliu Gangmei, some of the most notable long-distance runners from the community who have participated and won notable laurels across the country and around the world. They were accompanied by students of Highland National College, Kanglatongbi who followed the professionals all the way from Makhel to Makuiluangdi travelling a distance of about 40 kilometers to complete the run in about 8 hours. Trail run is a trending sport and a life-style that requires discipline and dedication and their participation in the festival have inspired many young Luangdimai people to embrace this sport enthusiastically.

Speaking at Makhel from where the trail run began, Aaron Pamei, one of the leaders of the trail run expressed deep gratitude to the Makhel Authorities and the Mao Council for the overwhelming welcome and hospitality the runners received at Makhel. He thanked Makhel village

and the Mao Council for generously providing food and accommodation for the runners. He felt they had been welcomed like true brothers. He assured the people of Makhel that they would go back to the Luangdimai people carrying the story of love and generosity they had been shown by the Makhel people and prayed that this bond of love between the brothers will continue to be strong. He further stated that this Ancestral trail run was the most meaningful and significant run for him and the runners.

Dr. Samuel Pamei, the chairman of LCF Elder's Board expressed his honour in addressing the Makuiluangdi Festival, describing the festival as celebrating the vibrant cultural identity, unity, and ancestral wisdom. He highlighted how the dances, music, and performances preserve heritage while the tradition connected them with modern life. He urged everyone to fully engage in the coming days of celebration, letting the stories and art inspire them. He concluded with a heartfelt gratitude to the performers, organizers, and attendees, wishing that the spirit of Makuiluangdi continues to uplift all.

Dr. Engam Pame, the Changi-Pi welcomed the congregations in traditional attire in spite of the cold evening to show by example that leading by action is the best way to inspire and encourage the people to embrace the idea of Malanwangbo, the return to the roots. The message of the Changi-Pi was loud and clear that the future of the people lies in coming together and being connected to traditions and history even as they venture out into the promises of the future. A tree-plantation drive was also initiated by the Press Information Bureau, Manipur at the Hallowed Ground of Makuiluangdi. Shri D. Gangmei (IAS Retired) Chairman Hill Area Committee, his wife Smt. Hannah Kamei (IAS), Dr. Johnny Ruangmei (NSDMA) and elders of the villager planted trees as part of the environment conservation effort of the festival.

A distinctive feature of Makuiluangdi Festival 2025 was the Luangdimai (Zeliangrong) Village Stone Piling Ceremony, where over 600 Luangdimai (Zeliangrong) villages spread across Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and other parts of Northeast India brought stones engraved with their village names, symbolizing unity, shared heritage and return of the native - Malanwangbo. The stones are piled on Hallowed Ground, the ground from where Luangdimai/Zeliangrong ancestors are believed to have lived and eventually dispersed to their present habitats in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

The festival also showcased vibrant cultural dance performances from the Zeliangrong Heraka Association of Assam and Nagaland, and Tingkao Raguang Chapriak of Manipur. *Wibo Luangdiram*, the theme song of Makuiluangdi Festival 2025 was presented by the students of Highland National College, Kanglatongbi. Participants and performers donned traditional attires, while local food stalls offered delectable traditional cuisines and beverages. Indigenous crafts, attires, books, herbal medicines, and artworks were displayed to reconnect visitors with ancient knowledge and aesthetics. Youth-oriented events such as folk song contests, traditional sports and art competitions were performed to further enliven the celebration.

The welcome note of the festival's valedictory event at Makuiluangdi was delivered by Mr. K. Elu Ndong, Convenor, Central Organizing Committee of the Festival. While welcoming the Zeliangrong people to the valedictory session, the Convenor called upon the blessings of our ancestors. The call of Malanwangbo is not merely an invitation; it is a spiritual summons that resonates in the heart of every Zeliangrong soul. It calls us back to our roots, to the land of Makuiluangdi—the cradle of our civilization—where the stories of our forefathers are etched into the soil and whispered by the winds. Wishing every Luangdimai/Zeliangrong that Makuiluangdi Festival and the spirit of Malanwangbo will reinvigorate the spirit of togetherness, peace and prosperity to all who embrace the idea of Malanwangbo across Luangdiram in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

Mr. Kagadai Gonmei, Kewi Thingwang, Lunggaibi Dangmei, and Diralung Nren are some of the prominent Zeliangrong/Luangdimai folksong veterans who delighted the gathering with their folksongs. Live sketching of portraits and painting exhibitions by Luangdimai artists were some of the main attractions of the festival.

Prof. Ajailiu Niumai, the first woman professor from the Luangdimai/Zeliangrong community, attended the festival and screened *Rani Gaidinliu: The Iconic Woman of the North East India*, an award-winning short animated movie at the festival. The movie is based on her article about how Rani Gaidinliu, a young Naga girl challenged the British rule and took over the responsibility of leading the Luangdimai/Zeliangrong people to fight against the colonial regime and the injustices they faced after Haipou Jadonang, her cousin and mentor was executed by the British.

Mr. Dinganglung Gangmei IAS (Retd.) Chairman, Hill Areas Committee, MLA Nungba A/C attended the festival and exhorted the gathering to be proud of their heritage and legacy of leadership that fought against injustices and be wary of the forces that seeks to weaken and divide the people.

He reminded the congregation that because of their valor and courage and their indomitable spirit to fight for their right against injustice, the Luangdimai/Zeliangrong were divided. He recalled how Haipou Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu fought against the British, and how many forces have tried to split the Luangdimai/Zeliangrong since the British rule. He also added, "Luangdimai/Zeliangrong people are now spread across three different states, yet our emotion and spirit remain as one. Boundaries cannot separate us; we are connected to each other. We are here to reaffirm that we are one and must move forward together. Youngsters, we need to carry on the saying: "The show must go on! Zeliangrong will bloom again."

Dr. Johnny Ruangmei, Joint Chief Executive Officer, NSDMA Government of Nagaland stressed on the urgent need of the Luangdimai (Zeliangrong) people to unite across Assam, Manipur & Nagaland stating that, although we are "divided by boundaries, our blood and spirit as Zeliangong/Luangdimai is one". We must rise up to the occasion and work together towards common aspiration.

The flag-dehoisting ceremony was led by Dr. Samuel Pamei, Chairman of Elders Board, Luandimai Citizens Forum. The vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Poujenlung Gonmei, Co-Convenor of the Festival Committee, acknowledged that the grand success of the festival was due to the collective efforts of the community and sacrifices made by their leaders, the hospitality of the leaders of Mao Council, Makhel village, Mao Union, 49 A/C Tadubi and Makhan Khuman, district administration of Senapati, generous donors and well-wishers, the cultural dance troupes from across Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

One of the major highlights of the festival which attracted the participation of almost all the congregations was the tug of war or the 'clash of the clans' between the Pamai and Newmai clans which was held for women and men. For the exogamous clans of Luangdimai this game was significant symbolically as well as practically as it reminded them of their kinship and unity. This was preceded by a friendly football match between FC Raengdai and Luangdimai FC followed by the game of 'Kabuipi kajapbo' or the bullhead catching. These are traditional games that test fitness and health and encourage competition and cooperation.

Elaibe Riamei, James Riamei & GMP, Ikimchule Panme, Kachangthai Gonmei, Neilimgai Gonmei and Dr. Kaguilan Kamei are some of the notable artistes who performed for the congregation late into the night despite the cold weather at Makuiluangdi village.

The committee expresses their heartfelt gratitude to Shri Som Kamei and Dr. Munish Singh for their valuable guidance and continuous support. While the North East Council (NEC) & Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), Shillong have come forward as the official sponsor and collaborator of the cultural festival, LCF also received valuable assistance and partnership of (1) FC Raengdai (2) Highland National College (HNC) (3) Gear Thrills Cycling Club, Nagaland (4). Zeliro Venturers (5) Spring Charitable Trust (6) Rongmei Riders (7) Zeliangrong Film Forum and (8) Faithheal Biotech (New Delhi). Without the prayers and tireless support of the community, particularly the villagers of Makuiluangdi, the festival committee could not have organized the event which was held after 2019. The committee therefore extends its deepest gratitude to all the generous donors and the people who helped in making the festival a resounding success.


Chairman
Luangdimai Bandua

Festival Photos :



Makuiluangdi festival 2025, GATE (Entrance)
@
Hallowed Ground, Makuiluangdi



Organisers of the Makuiluangdi Festival 2025

Link
Chairman
Luangdimai Bamdua



Runners along with Elders at the finish line .



Runners along with Elders with Medals and Certificates .


 Chairman
 Luangdimai Bamdua



Participants in Traditional attires



Dance troupe from Imphal (TRC Chabuan Phvam, Samdulong & Ragailong, Imphal).

Amk
Chairman
Luangdimai Bamdua