

# World News

## Iran Proudly Presents its First Open Source Project

Two years of work it took, and now it's going operational: The provincial unit of the Iranian Ministry of Industries and Mines in Kerman has deployed a new internal IT system based on Linux and other Open Source software. It's the country's first homegrown project in this field, providing a paperless automated office workspace and a secure teleworking system via Internet.

The system, named WISA, provides E-forms for more than 30 separate applications and supports the decision workflow within the organization online.



A glance under the hood reveals Apache web servers and MySQL database servers. Most applications were written in C++, PHP and Perl, with some in Python and Ruby. "We tested more than 40 Linux distros, from Red Hat to Knoppix, and decided to use customized combinations of different distros on our servers. But the future plan is to build our own distro from scratch!", project initiator Davoud Seyedin Boroujeni told Linux Magazine.

While employees use Linux thin clients with KDE, the development team consisting of Mr. Seyedin Boroujeni, Miss Atefeh Hasibi, and Miss Shima Shaban, has further plans: a WAP gateway that allows users to access some services via mobile phones.

The decision for Open Source software wasn't merely based on monetary considerations in contrast to comparable projects in other countries. Similar, but commercial, solutions run on Windows, and using Windows in Iran is illegal as Microsoft does not sell its products to "axis of evil" countries like Iran. ■

## Survey Suffers from Translation Problems

Europe, the USA, and Japan have already had theirs, and now Asia can look forward to its own comprehensive Free and Open Source Software (FLOSS) study. The Mitsubishi Research Institute (MRI), Japan, is conducting the survey, which started December 1 2003 as part of a project called "Survey on Human Resource Development for Open Source Software Developers", supported by the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

Its objective is to provide a source of valuable information for the FLOSS community, for businesses and policy makers. Questionnaires are available in five languages: English, Traditional (Big-5) and Simplified (GB2312) Chinese, Korean, and Thai. However, by the end of January, MRI had received only 130

responses. The researchers believe the main reasons for the poor response rate to be lack of promotion and inconsistent terminology caused by translating the original English questionnaire into local languages. Language barriers seem to have prevented local developers from fully understanding the survey. However, the researchers are confident that the responses will shed some light on FLOSS trends in Asia.

The results will be published in April 2004. More FLOSS surveys will be conducted in Asia this year, for example one in cooperation with the Software Liberation Association in Taiwan (SLAT). ■

<http://oss.mri.co.jp/floss-asia/index-en.html> (FLOSS-Asia)

<http://www.infonomics.nl/FLOSS/report/> (FLOSS-Europe)

## Tax Office under Fire for not Supporting Linux

Dutch citizens who wish to file income tax returns electronically need a PC running certain versions of Microsoft Windows. Other platforms will not be supported until there are at least 50,000 installations.

How the tax office actually counts is uncertain, and hence the "Christen-Unie", a right-wing, Christian party, asked the responsible minister for clarification in parliament. MP André Rouvoet suspects that the required number of Linux installations has already been reached. Backed by the unanimous vote for more Open Source support within the Dutch government in 2002, the parliament feels it's time for action.

Meanwhile Dutch Macintosh supporters have launched an online petition to demand tax software for several platforms. ■

<http://www.macfreak.nl/>

## Forbidden to Choose Linux

When pupils in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, use their new computers at school they are probably unaware of a serious choice that might soon confront them: Would they prefer to keep the Microsoft-based equipment or rather a teacher? In the startup phase of the city's IT for schools scheme worth 110 million Norwegian Crowns (about 12.6 m Euro), the software company provided system administration services free of charge. But now schools are expected to pay.

In times when most of them are short of funds, many principals have started looking into alternatives. And they are already there – in the form of Skolelinux (see Issue 37 p10), a Debian-based Linux distribution developed for Norwegian schools. In Oslo, there are already two schools using it.

But schools wishing to move over to Skolelinux in 2004 seem to be out of luck, as the city's school department won't allow them to. In an interview with the country's biggest daily newspaper, "Aftenposten", the department's IT director Bjørn Marthinsen said: "At the moment we have to comply with the contracts we've signed. But we're going to use this year to find out whether we will consider a Linux-based solution in

the future. This, we weren't able to do in the past as Oslo city council has been bound to standardization rules. Hence we had to use Microsoft products." But that might change in the future: The city board asked the school department to evaluate whether Linux might save money and whether schools might run programs they've used in the past on Linux. ■

### ■ **New Delhi to Beat Bangalore?**

Three days long and four to five parallel conference tracks "wide" – this is how the organizers of "Linux Asia 2004" are trying to challenge Linux Bangalore's reputation as the subcontinent's biggest Linux show. By the time this magazine goes to press (February 11–13) the number of visitors will have shown whether the first edition of this ambitious new conference has fulfilled its promises to "be the largest Open Source event in the whole of Asia" and "the biggest IT event

to be held at New Delhi", as the website claims.

Unlike Linux Bangalore, the conference held at New Delhi's Indian Habitat Centre does not focus on Linux and Open Source technology, but on how to do business with it. Hence, the list of speakers mainly features CEOs, CTOs, and other managers, both national and international, among them Keynote speakers like Apache's Brian Behlendorf and LynuxWork's CEO of Indian origin, Inder Singh, both from the US.

Beside the Keynotes, the three other tracks include talks on how to use FLOSS within an enterprise, how to build an enterprise around Open Source software, and FLOSS in government and society. The "Technology Workshops Program" feels a bit out of place against this background: The three-day workshop aims to teach people how to perform basic system administration tasks on Red Hat Linux. ■

<http://www.linuxasia2004.com/>

### ■ **Microsoft at World War with Lindows**

The Lindows vs. Windows battle continues, and it doesn't look good for the Linux company: When Microsoft finally took the trademark dispute to European courts, temporary restraining orders that prohibit Lindows to use the Lindows, Lindows.com, and LindowsOS trademarks were issued in Sweden (see Issue 39 p14) and Finland.

In the Netherlands, the judge ordered Lindows.com to stop distribution to dealers and shut down access to their websites for 90 days. This court order is valid in Belgium and Luxembourg, too.

In the US, a jury will hear the arguments of the combatants during a two week period starting March 1st. If Gates' and Ballmer's testimonies are convincing, Lindows.com, who claim that Windows is just a generic word, will have to change its name. If not, Microsoft has some serious issues with the MS Windows trademark. ■