

World News

■ Hindi is the Language of the Tux

In his now famous piece on Slashdot entitled “Why Linux Makes Sense for India”, Professor Venkatesh (Venky) Hariharan argued that “the localization of Linux to Indian languages can spark off a revolution that reaches down to the grassroots levels of the country”. This simple statement was the inspiration behind setting up IndLinux – The Indian Linux Project with initial funding from Netcore and a handful of volunteers.

Addressing the need for localized software and interfaces, the project aims to build a fully Indian language enabled distro, with focus on ease of use and functionality. With a small team of dedicated volunteers, the project has come a long way. So far it has managed to complete 80 percent of KDE 3.2, 20 percent of GNOME and 100 percent of Xfce string translations. Furthermore it has released in the public domain localized application sets based on GNOME and KDE, Xfce desktops in Hindi as well as a bootable LiveCD with Indian language interface.

Deployment efforts primarily center around the personal desktop or community kiosk. The initial aim is to provide a functional and localized computing experience which enables the end-user to learn and reskill.

The project has seen a constant turnaround in the number of volunteers with quite a few choosing to stay on throughout the lifetime. Translators and language experts as well as people skilled in C/C++, Python, Perl and shell scripting are always welcome to join it.

The hurdles IndLinux faces are similar to other localization projects. These include the small number of volunteers, coordination issues, font and other technical issues. For Hindi in particular, lack of standardized terminology is an issue, which however has been addressed by creating its own set of jargon.

IndLinux plans to initiate a Hindi translation project, which would derive from GNOME-KDE Hindi work done so



far. The aim is to have a large team of translators who can work on technical and general translations including user documentation.

Further down the line there are plans to integrate content development tools for anyone to develop Indian language content rapidly.

The project is also involved in team formation and initial support for Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Telugu localization initiatives – the Indian sub-continent is rich in languages spoken by millions of people. ■

<http://www.indlinux.org/>

<http://www.indlinux.org/hindi/gnome/gnome24.html>

<http://www.indlinux.org/hindi/kde/gallery/>

■ Free Code from Africa

Africa Source, the first pan-African meeting of free and Open Source software developers, drew together over 60 people from 25 countries (including nearly 20 African countries such as Benin, Tanzania, Cameroon, Ethiopia, just to name a few). Coming from the commercial, academic and non-profit sectors, the spectrum of participants ranged from advanced programmers to those with basic skills in LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL, and PHP).

The five day developer workshop, organized by Amsterdam-based NGO Tactical Technology Collective took place in Okahanja, Namibia March 15 to 19. Its aim was to build a network of OSS developers across the continent, to facilitate cooperation, improve education and aid NGOs by sharing experiences and skills. Accompanied by African food (braai food), aboriginal African dance and

music, the participants were totally immersed in mutual learning.

Hence participant and GStreamer developer Andy Wingo felt “wonderful to meet other hackers of the continent, and especially seeing quality home-grown hackers working on home-grown solutions”. He was particularly impressed by Guido Sohne and organizers like Joris Komen from SchoolNet



Namibia. “They do hard, enthusiastic work towards equalizing the social problems that prevent the development of good hackers.” Neil Blakey-Milner of South Africa was delighted to see that many people found learning about blogging and Zope was the best thing they’d learned in the past week.

An NGO-in-a-box, a set of CDs for people trying to convince non-governmental organizations to use Open Source, should be a great help in improving the situation for better learning, cooperating, and coding. At the end of the event, each participant was given a copy. However, Africa still suffers from fundamental problems such as a lack of computers, and expensive bandwidth. ■

<http://www.tacticaltech.org/>

<http://www.advogato.org/person/wingo/>

<http://www.ryze.com/go/wgsohne>

<http://www.schoolnet.na/>

<http://mithrandr.moria.org/>

