

World News

■ Norwegians free to use DeCSS

It was back in January, 2000 when the Motion Pictures Association of America, and the DVD Copy Control Association Inc. contacted Økokrim, Norway's police department to deal with economical and environmental crime. In turn, a 16 year old from Lardal south of Norway's capital Oslo, was accused to have acted illegally when he released the DVD decryption program DeCSS (developed by him using decryption code by others) on the internet. This, claimed the prosecutors, could enable pirate copying of DVDs.

Although the original DeCSS was a Windows program, Jon Lech Johansen's defense strategy mainly used the argument that he intended to watch his legally bought DVDs under Linux. As no licensed player for Linux had been available at this time, his defense lawyer came up with the following argument:

"If one holds a letter against a light in order to glance at the content, this means irregular access. But as it's my own letter, it's not criminal."

7th January, 2003, the unique law suit at Oslo court finally found a happy end: Jon Lech Johansen won on all counts when judge Irene Sogn declared accessing legally bought DVDs using means not intended by the DVD producers was legal, and thus made it clear that unlicensed DVD-players are legal in Norway.

Økokrim failed to prove evidence for pirate mass copying of DVDs using DeCSS in Norway, and the court ruled that "DVD Jon" couldn't be punished if others used his program to illegally watch DVD movies as long as the software had a legal right to exist. Økokrim considers filing an appeal.

<http://www.aftenposten.no/english/local/article.jhtml?articleID=466519>

■ India discusses Open Source business model

In a cash-strapped economy, earning from Free/Libre and Open Source software (FLOSS) can still be a major concern. Dr. Tarique Sani (tarique@sanisoft.com) has published the SANISOFT Open Source Business Model on his company's site to enforce discussion. If you think: "What's the fuzz?", Raj Mathur (raju@linux-delhi.org) of Delhi's arguments may help Westerners to see the problems:

"India is a very human-resource-rich country, so perception of product value tends to be much higher than service value. I personally believe that Linux and FLOSS are the means to switch an IT economy from product-based to service-based. However, that's not going to happen in India until the person who can get a haircut for 20 cents and a live-in maid for \$30 per month starts appreciating the value of time, expertise and experience."

<http://www.sanisoft.com/openmodel.php>

■ Knoppix distribution goes Taiwanese

Many Taiwanese Linux users have been amazed by the power of the Knoppix distribution that allows a more flexible use of Linux. Consequentially, a Taiwanese version named "bv0103" using Chinese Big5 characters recently came into being.

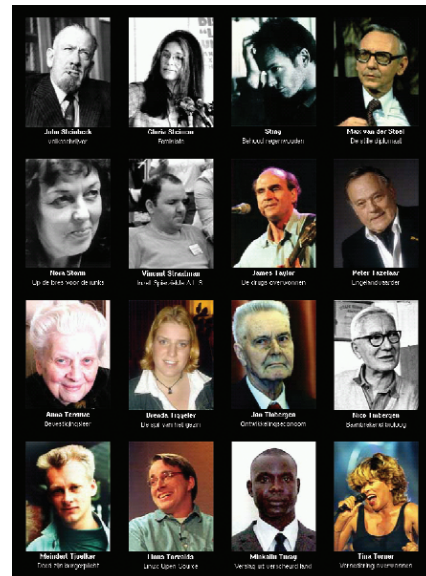
The latest version adds the `iocharset=big5` mount option to the `/etc/fstab` so that windows files on FAT16, FAT32, and NTFS partitions automatically show up with Chinese Big5 filenames, and resolves problems with spaces in file or directory names. Further changes include an update of the `knx-hdinstall` program that installs Knoppix on a hard disk to version 0.37 and a newer kernel 2.4.20.

Contrary to the original Knoppix, bv0103 can be restarted from USB (not only from floppy) disk. It detects LCD monitors and PS/2 mice, and shuts down monitor power automatically.

<http://cle.linux.org.tw/pub2/KNOPPIX/bv1a1/KNOPPIX-bv-20030108.iso>

■ Linus is a hero

365 heros on one poster – this is how the (nominally) catholic Dutch radiostation KRO ("Katholieke Radio Omroep") bid farewell to old year 2002. Most of the chosen men and women are Dutch, the



rest internationally known politicians, artists, activists, athletes, scientists, celebrities and heros of a day like Kofi Annan, Marlene Dietrich, Jane Godall, The Dalai Lama, Rigoberta Menchú and New Yorks firebrigade. Plus two single computer people: Tim Berners-Lee of WWW-fame and Linus Torvalds.

<http://www.kro.nl/gevoeldelen/helden/view.php>

■ Israeli army to deploy Linux

Briefly after the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) signed a three years contract with Microsoft, the new commander of the IDF's central computer facility "Mamram", Avi Kochba, admitted that the deployment of Linux and Open Source software is being considered by the armed forces – mainly as a means of cutting cost.

In an interview with Israelian daily "Ha'aretz" he said: "We will, for example, be the first in Israel to operate Linux based on the IBM mainframe computer" but added that Microsoft won't be on the way out of the army in the near future.

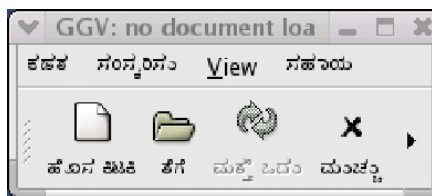
<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=246791>

■ GNOME in Kannada

For a region struggling to get Linux solutions working in languages spoken by tens of millions, some interesting developments are being reported of late.

Whilst Arun Sharma back in September, 2002 showed off with KDE desktop parts in Kannada on the Kannada mailing list, it was recently Pramod R's turn to proudly present some screenshots of GNOME applications in this South Indian language spoken by some 47 million speakers.

Meanwhile, Gurupkar Waraich (waraich@linuxmail.org) is about to start a new team for Punjabi localization. Says he: "Volunteers please get in touch so that we can start working." Punjabi is spoken by some 96 million, not just in India but also across the border in Pakistan. ■



<http://kannada.sourceforge.net/gnome-screens/screenshots.html>
<http://www.sharma-home.net/mailman/listinfo/kannada>
<http://punjabi-linux.sourceforge.net/>

■ Open standards for The Netherlands

The Dutch government puts its money where its mouth is. In response to a study by the Ministries of Economics and of the Interior showing that open standards and Open Source software can help to economize public finances, a program to push both of them has been launched.

The "Programma voor Open Standaarden en Open Source" is intended to inform about open standards and Open Source, to advise and simplify its deployment during a three years period. It will be implemented by the ICTU (the Dutch organisation for information and communication technology and government), and has a budget of 3 Mio. Euros.

To avoid reinventing the wheel, the program aims at cooperation with

■ GNUMifying festival

Symbiosis Institute of Computer Studies and Research (SICSR) is a college in the central Indian city of Pune with over 16,000 students from more than 32 countries. Each year SICSR organizes a fest called "Unify", which is composed of various cultural, academic events and contests.

This year, the institution is adding on "GNUMify - The All India Free Software Festival" in order to contribute to and



encourage the Free Software movement in India by "awarding the best and motivating the rest". Events scheduled on February 15-16, 2003 will include open-for-all code presentations in the fields of application and embedded Linux development, networking programming, kernel and device driver development.

There will also be paper presentations for students, hands-on workshops, a Linux and GNU/Hurd install fest and more. If possible, this might coincide with Richard Stallman's visit to India. ■

<http://www.sicrs.ac.in/gnumify/>

■ Video Whale from Pakistan

Computers in Pakistani schools and colleges? The only cost-sensible legal solution are low cost PCs running Linux and other Open Source software.

To provide educational institutions with quickly set up videowalls for use in the classrooms, Umer Anwar Sheikh from Peshawar based company "North West Research" initiated and funded a videowall implementation using Gstreamer and Xinerama. Developed by Zeeshan Ali Khattak, the Video Whale Project came into being. ■

<http://www.gstreamer.net/apps/vw/>



■ UK Health & Safety

The UK's Health and Safety Executive has completed a preliminary assessment of Linux for safety related systems.

The report (RR 011) considers the availability and quality of evidence for the safety integrity of Linux - defining three criteria for the suitability in safety related applications:

- the operating system must be sufficiently well understood,
- that it must be suitable for the characteristics of the safety related application,
- and that it must be sufficiently reliable.

Linux is assessed, and a framework for the hazard analysis of the interaction between applications and operating system is given. The report concludes that Linux would be suitable for use in many safety related applications with Safety integrity level (SIL) 1, SIL 2 integrity requirements, and that certification to SIL 3 would be possible.

It states it is not likely to be either suitable or certifiable for SIL 4 applications. ■

<http://hse.gov.uk/research/>