

# 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

