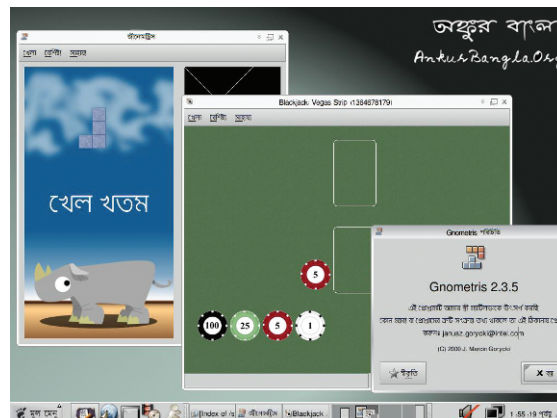# World News

■ Tux Speaks Bengali

Little more than one year after its formation, the Ankur Bangla Project has released the AnkurBangla LiveDesktop v1.0, which is both a LiveCD distribution based on GNOME 2.4, and a milestone in the Bengali localization of Linux. Bengali (or Bangla) is not only the language of Indian Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, but with about 200 million native speakers also the 5th (some sources claim 7th) most widely spoken language in the world.

Despite its version number, release coordinator Sayamindu Dasgupta prefers to call the release, codenamed "Paanto-Bhuter Jyaanto Chhaanaaa", a technology preview. However, much has been improved since the previous beta release. Updated packages include xine-lib (now at 1.0-rc1) and Gaim 0.72 (with support for the newer avatars of MSN and Yahoo! protocols). The documentation has been updated. With this release, as soon as the end users pops the CD into a Windows box, it autoruns, displaying a nice HTML page and coming up with information about the CD and directions on how to boot from it.

The Ankur group is an example of a classical FLOSS organization, being exclusively virtual in nature. It includes hackers, technology specialists, linguists, font designers, graphic artists, and enthusiasts from India and West Bengal. Providing a completely localized Linux operating system is one of the core issues that this group takes seriously.

The project's page lists quite a few of them, like Bangla Gutenberg, an archive of Public Domain works in Bengali, Lekho, a multi-platform editor and document output program, and BSpeller, a spellchecker and dictionary that is integrated in the LiveCD at the modular level.

The Ankur effort is being consolidated at two levels, a localized KDE (with a possible release of a KDE LiveCD) and a full-blown enterprise scale distribution. The group is also defining the paradigm of Localized Low Cost Computing, something that is being referred to as L2C2. Extending the concept of low cost computing, L2C2 involves extensive customization in order to produce a content rich computing experience. ■

http://www.bengalinux.org/

■ The Open Source World Met in Spain

Open Source and royal glamor, that's not exactly something that one would expect to mix easily. But in Málaga, a city in the south of Spain, the two did meet at the city's first International Open Source World Conference February 18th to 24th, 2004, as the conference was inaugurated by HRH Crown Prince Felipe de Borbón himself. In his opening speech at the Palacio de Ferias y Congresos, a modern building with wireless and UMTS access, Prince Felipe talked about the importance of making technology accessible to everyone, no matter what their social and economic status might be.

The city of Málaga is located in the Spanish region of Andalusia which prides itself in a local Linux distribution, just like the region of Extremadura with LinEx (see Issue 31, p13). GuadaLinex, another offspring of Debian GNU/Linux, was developed in response to the local government's plan to deploy Open Source and free software. During the conference, the organizers handed out 10,000 GuadaLinex CDs and 2,500 technical manuals.

Beside attending the conference program, an interested audience also took part in several forums and workshops. The speakers included Miguel de Icaza, who spoke about the "Mono" project, a free version of Microsoft's .NET technology, and Niranjan Rajani, the head of the Finnish study on the significance of free and Open Source software for developing countries (see Issue 33, p84).

One of the most interesting workshops, titled "The Vision of the Gurus", was held on the last day with Debian project leader Martin Michmayr, Novell's Miguel de Icaza, Sun's Chief Technology Evangelist Simon Phipps and Bdale Garbee from HP discussing the vision and future of Open Source. Altogether 5,000 visitors from countries like Spain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Australia made this event a major success. ■

http://www.opensourceworldconference.com/

■ New Office in Haarlem

When an upgrade of its office software became imminent, the Dutch city of Haarlem (located close to Amsterdam) evaluated the option of moving to OpenOffice. Research proved that changing to Open Source software would save over half a million Euro, without losing any functionality. The study (in Dutch) will be going online soon, and IBM has announced plans to translate the document into English.

The decision in favor of migration was made accordingly. Its implementation will force the IT-department to rebuild document templates. But migrating to a newer version of Microsoft Office would have meant doing that too. The lack of compatibility between Microsoft Office versions seems to offset the startup costs normally found with Open Source solutions.

Haarlem can now offer its 147,000 citizens lower TCO, and the status symbol of being the first city in the Netherlands to make such a move. ■

■ Open Content Licences Go Japan

When licenses resemble the legal code processed by legal "operating systems" of various jurisdictions, it is important to "port" or adapt them for use across those different systems. At the beginning of March, Creative Commons (CC) and GLOCOM, the Tokyo-based Center for Global Communications at the International University of Japan, released official Japanese copyright licenses for iCommons (International Commons) Japan, the first country-specific adaptation of the Open Content system.

The licenses, translated into the Japanese language and adapted to Japanese law, allow copyright holders to easily inform others that their work is freely available for copying and other uses, under specific conditions, and thus to declare some rights as reserved.

The accompanying self-help tools, which are provided free of charge, provide new ways of distributing creative work on generous terms across the broad spectrum between full copyright and public domain. Japanese-speaking visitors to the Creative Commons website can look forward to a full Japanese translation of the license choice process as the site detects the user's web browser settings.

Unlike the original CC licenses, Japanese copyright law is based on continental European laws. The main task in the process of porting these licenses, therefore involves both literal and legal translation. Taiwan and China, the other two Asian countries in the iCommons project, are currently struggling with major changes in substantive law regarding the CC licences, too.

According to Motohiro Tsuchiya, the iCommons Japan project leader, assistant professor and senior research fellow at GLOCOM, many people in Japan are using the licenses for their blogs. This is probably due to the fact that Lawrence Lessig, the chairman of Creative Commons and professor of law at Stanford, himself does so. Amongst the many strong supporters of the CC licenses, there are, however, only a few big commercial adopters in Japan. ■

http://creativecommons.org/projects/international/
http://www.glocom.ac.jp/

■ Linux Beats Windows in Russia

Russia is getting down to business with Open Source (see also Issue 40, p11): According to the Russian newspaper "Kommersant", the country's Ministry of Education signed a new contract with the local company "Lokomotiv" to install Linux on more than 14,000 PCs.

The Russian Linux distributor Alt-Linux will provide the software, and Novell will be responsible for customer support. About 90 percent of the investment, will be spend on hardware, however. ■

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