# World News

Milestones for Asian Input Systems

It has been a prolonged mission for software developers in the Chinese, Japanese and Korean (CJK) speaking countries to create usable and useful language input systems. Reflecting the relevance of these East-Asian languages, input systems developed for the Chinese language normally can be extended to support Japanese and Korean fonts and input methods easily. During the past months, a number of Taiwan-based projects developing Chinese input (CIN) systems which enable users to display and input Chinese characters when using Linux and BSD applications have announced breakthroughs.

Three UTF-8 support patches have been added to the new 2.5.3pre3 version of XCIN, a popular Chinese input method. They came from Red Hat, Firefly, and Kuang-che Wu; the latter two are Taiwanese free software developers.

Licensed under the GPL, the software runs under X11 on Linux, FreeBSD and other Unix-style systems. With a UTF-8 supporting X-terminal emulator such as *mlterm* and a larger font such as *ming_uni.ttf* installed, XCIN users can input more Traditional Chinese characters and phrases under Linux than they could do with MS Windows.

Edward Liu is busy developing another CIN project, GCIN, the "GTK Chinese Input application" for X. GCIN is released under the GPL. Edward announced a new "phrase preselect" feature in version 0.4. GCIN currently supports Traditional Chinese (as used in Taiwan) and Japanese character sets.
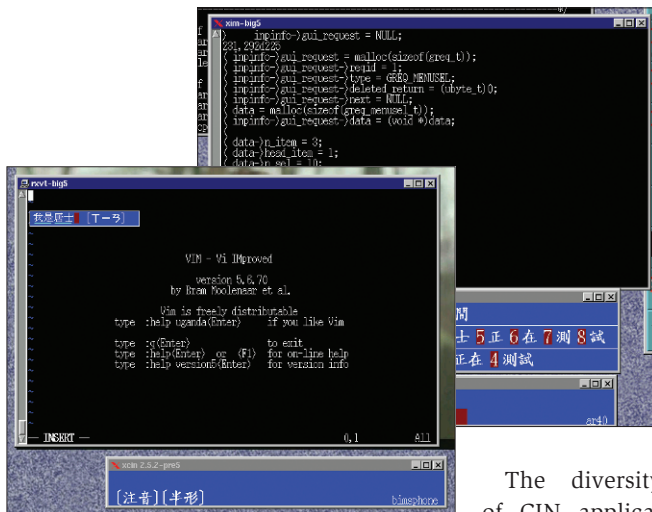
The diversity of CIN applications has its downside though: Integration work is urgently required for further free software development in East Asia. Luckily the developers themselves are very enthusiastic about exchanging various fonts and input. ■

http://www.software-facilities.com/chinese-software/gcin.php
http://www.csie.nctu.edu.tw/~cp76/gcin
http://xcin.linux.org.tw
http://mlterm.sourceforge.net
http://linux.taigi.idv.tw

Indic Localization Gets Formal

As Open Source localization (L10n) gains more and more momentum on the Indian subcontinent with its numerous languages and alphabets (see Issue 45 p), coordination of the several Indic L10n projects has become a vital issue. Volunteer groups and organizations involved in this big task were invited to put their money where their mouths are and meet in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), on September 18 and 19.

Among the attendants were representatives of the "Technology Development for Indian Languages" (TDIL) working group of the State Department of Information Technology, the L10n teams for Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Oriya, Urdu and Bengali, and several scientific institutions and companies (including IBM and Red Hat). One of their goals was to find a channel for cooperation with international development bodies like Uni-

code, Pango, or the X-Consortium.

As a result the meeting saw the formation of a Working Group that include team leaders from all Indic L10n groups. Its aim is to focus on L10n of free and Open Source software, and as an immediate goal, to suggest policy changes in order to encourage L10n of software in Indian languages. Here the group is to suggest a law which mandates inclusion of localized software with every PC

shipped in the country, similar to the Chinese one.

But localized applications are only half the story. Action is also needed regarding documentation, and usability. Here the discussion centered around creating documentation specific to Indic L10n which addresses areas of usability and learnability with regard to creation of test cases and test suites. In a resolution at the end of the meeting, the participants called to pro-actively engage with publishers to promote content in Indian languages. With the creation of an online L10n status map, the Working Group would also take stock of pending tasks like documentation, development of Unicode aware applications and collation. ■

http://tdil.mit.gov.in
http://www.indictrans.org
http://indlinux.org
http://tdil.mit.gov.in/download/openfonts.htm

■ Venezuela Goes for Open Source

Venezuela's government is working on a decree to establish the support and adoption of Open Source software throughout public administration. When President Hugo Chavez announced this move during the opening ceremony of a new public info center with 60 Internet workstations and several smaller ones September 28, the Minister of Science and Technology, Yadira Córdoba, made clear that the government is serious about its self-proclaimed principle of "national scientific independence" from privately owned software.

Not only is her ministry one of the early adopters of Open Source software in the South-American country, but all of the more than 300 info centers nation-wide avoid the use of proprietary software. They provide public Internet access in accordance with the government's plan to raise the educational level especially in poorer areas. According to president Chavez, 343 of them will be set up by the end of 2004.

In addition, 81 of a total of about 300 municipalities are already populating an eGovernment platform based on free software. Success stories like these aside, Córdoba admits that the entire migration process needs time: "We don't want to implement the changes too quickly because they mean introducing a new culture, and new points of view. On the contrary, we want to adopt free software step by step." ■

■ Smaller Cities Can Save Money Using Linux

An average EUR 308 per desktop could be saved annually, if Dutch cities were to embrace Linux. As part of the A7-project, named after the A7-highway, the Dutch ICT consulting company Footmark BV investigated the IT-infrastructure of five small and medium sized townships with 60 to 140 workstations each.

In the course of the study it became apparent that money could be saved if terminal server solutions were implemented based on a combination of Windows Terminal Server and Linux Terminal Server, instead of the traditional Windows-only implementation. By mixing the two systems, legacy applications would remain operational, saving expensive migration efforts. In the future the study expects more and more critical applications to become available for Linux and envisages extra cost-saving opportunities.

As a side-effect of the study, city IT departments started to see alternatives to their present solutions. "Openoffice.org migrations like the one in the city of Haarlem [ed.: see Issue 42 p12] showed them that they are customers and thus have a natural right to put demands on the table", says Bouke Koelstra, Product Manager Open Source with Footmark. As a result of increasing pressure, the Dutch market leader in government software, PinkRoccade, announced future Linux support. And their main competitor, Centric, had no option but to follow suit.

Meanwhile the study has been noted by the Dutch parliament and socialist MEP Martijn van Dam asked what the Ministry of Internal Affairs was going to do with the results. Van Dam hopes to increase the budget of the government open standards and Open Source promoter OSOSS. ■

■ Russian Linux Components for Taiwan

Russian programmers will be developing security-enhanced Linux components for Taiwan's governmental institutions.

The decision to sign a contract to this effect at the "Russian-Taiwan Forum" in Moscow at the beginning of September was made after the Russian consortium "Inforus" presented the Taiwan Institute for Information Industry (III) its ideas on "the Linux of the future". Inforus is an umbrella organization of more than 70 Russian IT companies. Its aim is to initiate offshore programming contracts with foreign partners.

Although the contract details themselves remain secret, Inforus' President Andrey Masalovich was proud to point out some of the ideas that had convinced the Taiwanese side.

One of these ideas was, for example, "smart folders" that group documents based on search criteria rather than their physical location, a built-in search engine, and honeypots to trap hackers scanning for vulnerabilities.

Software development was reported to have begun at the end of September: a hitherto undisclosed company from St. Petersburg is responsible for pilot versions of the components, and each of the modules, which are being developed simultaneously, will take "no less than 10 man-months".

All secrets aside, Masalovich was eager to make one important point: "The price was determined according to international (neither Asian nor Russian) outsourcing rates, that is without price dumping", Masalovich said. ■

http://inforus.biz/eng
http://inforus.biz/eng/company

bare figures

bet

hot baby   **!!**