

Press release

Madam/Sir,

A voluntary, free of cost training camp of software professionals, students and faculty was conducted today, March 20<sup>th</sup> 2010 to promote use and development of “free software” in local languages like Marathi, Hindi, etc.

The “localization camp” was organized by Swathanthra Malayalam Computing (SMC), Unicode (Lokayat's Free software Initiative) and CoFSUG(CoEP's free software Users group). All these organizations have been working towards promotion, use and development of “free software” in local languages. The venue was provided by “Red Hat”.

The organizers conducted this camp out of the firm belief that for IT to reach to masses , it must be available for use in vernacular languages. The camp was also aimed at promoting “free software”. Free software is that software which can be copied, studied, modified and redistributed as a right. Please note that the word “free” is used in the sense of “freedom” here and not in the sense of “no cost”. Software like Microsoft Windows, Adobe Photoshop, CorelDraw, etc. are NOT free software. GNU/Linux is an operating system which is “free software” and has emerged as the most potent competitor to the monopoly of Microsoft Windows. For example Mozilla Firefox is a free software replacement of Microsoft Internet Explorer, OpenOffice is a free software replacement of Microsoft office. Many GNU/Linux systems are available free of cost, are virus free, more stable and secure than Windows based systems.

As Linux can be copied and distributed, it leads naturally to development by a community through co-operation and sharing. The organizers have been a part of the “Linux community” which develops and propagates use of various Linux based software using the “free software” model, often free of cost. This camp was part of the community effort towards taking IT to people and also propagating the use of GNU/Linux.

Nearly 25 students and professionals participated in this training program. Software professionals who pioneered software development in Hindi, Marathi, Malayalam delivered presentations on various software tools and technologies used in localization of different software. Naveen Kumar from Red Hat introduced the Unicode standard and encoding techniques like “UTF-8” used to write complex Indic scripts. Ankit Patel and Pravin A, also from Red Hat, Abhijit A.M. From CoEP and Rishikesh from Lokayat introduced the attendees to the concept of free software. Karunakar G from Symantec software, and the pioneer of IndLinux project told about the history of localization effort in India.

Pravin A said “ Enforcing learning of English on people just for using computers is too much of an expectation” . Karunakaran G said “ It is a sad irony that in an

independent country we still use Roman script keyboards on our computers”. Naveen Kumar criticized the use of non-standard fonts particularly by DTP software users and advocated that everyone should switch to the use of Unicode standard. Abhijit A M, faculty, CoEP advocated the use of free software in educational institutes as students can learn the state of the art software technology only through GNU/Linux. Rishikesh of Lokayat said that “Using free software and local languages is an integral part of a country's sovereignty and we must strive for it ”.

We request you to publish this news in your newspaper and inform the people about availability of software in Local languages like Marathi on GNU/Linux systems.

Sincerely,

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