<u>Press release</u>

Pune
21 March 2010

Madam/Sir,

A voluntary, free of cost training camp of software professionals, students and faculty was conducted on March 20th and 21st 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), Uncode (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. Ankit Patel and Praveen A explained localisation process used in GNOME, a very popular desktop interface and collection of applications like text editors, calculators. Participants got a real time hands on experience in translating GNOME applications. Software like Lokalize, poedit, emacs were used for translating these applications from English to Indian languages like Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati and Malayalam.

Naveen Kumar explained various applications like Anumaan - which guess words based on characters or words already typed (this is useful for people who difficulty in typing due to disabilities), Sphinx - which detects spoken words sentences and converts them to text, Dhvani - a software which can read text in Indian languages and produce sound (it is very useful for blind people).

Runa Bhattacharjee explained difficulties faced by translators like finding correct translations for many situations. There was a good discussion on the importance of translating applications to local languages. Runa asked the participants if it is easier for teaching people English considering the difficulties faced. Rishikesh of Lokayat said that "a language is associated with knowledge and culture and people find it important to preserve it". Participants observed it is always easier to find solutions or work around to these challenges than expecting everybody to learn English.

Rajiv Ranjan talked about work done to translate frequently used words in many different applications (FUEL or frequently used entries in localisation project). The participants decided to conduct more such events in various colleges around Pune. We expect students participated in this event to work on various technologies introduced in this event.

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.

Please find the photo of the event also attached. Complete details of the two day camp is available in SMC's website http://wiki.smc.org.in/Localisation_Camp/Pune

Sincerely,

Praveen Arimbrathodiyil   Rishikesh Yeolekar   Abhijit A.M.
+91 9561745712   +91 9423507864   +91 9422308125
Swathanthra Malayalam Computing Uncode,Lokayat's Free software Initiative CoFSUG (CoEP's free software Users group)