

Report on the Meeting of the Project Country Partners with Policy Makers

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Background information

Standardization of keyboard layouts has been a burning issue in the field of information technology in Nepal. Much exercise in this direction has been going on ever since the year 2004, yet this issue has remained unresolved till now owing to several reasons. This issue was also raised in the first Policy Makers Meeting that was called by Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya in October 2007. As a follow up to that meeting, this time the agenda of the meeting of the Policy Makers was set as “Standardization of keyboard layouts”. Unlike the first one, this time, it was a joint meeting convened by the National Languages In Information Technology(NLIT) Steering Committee and Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya (MPP) and held at the premises of the High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT) office. Need to note that HLCIT is an apex body formed under the chairmanship of the Rtd. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal with a view to providing crucial strategic direction and helping formulate appropriate policy responses for the development of ICT sector in the country. NLIT, on the other hand was established by HLCIT in order to strengthen the use of national languages of Nepal in the IT sector on behalf of the former. Until late, NLIT used to be known as Nepali Language In Information Technology. It was only after the April 2007 people's uprising that it got its new name as a heed from the government's side to be more inclusive and provide equal opportunities to all the national languages of Nepal in the IT sector apart from Nepali.

Chief agenda of the meeting

Standardization of Nepali Unicode keyboard layouts

Sub agendas of the meeting

1. Typing in Nepali, still a hurdle for the majority of people.
2. An overview of some of the existing Nepali Unicode Keyboard Layouts.
3. The need of Keyboard Layout Standardization.
4. Prime issues in Keyboard Layouts Standardization.
5. General criteria for Keyboard Layout Standards.
6. Evaluation methodology of Keyboard Layouts.
7. Tamil Keyboard Layouts Standardization, a case study.
8. Proposed roadmap for coming up with a Standard Keyboard Layout.

Minutes of the meeting proceedings

On February 17, 2008 at the HLCIT Meeting Hall, SinghaDurbar, Kathmandu, a meeting of the Policy Makers was conducted jointly by NLIT and MPP.

This meeting was chaired by the chairman of NLIT, Mr. RamSharan Pandey. Among other key persons present in the meeting were Hon. Vice Chairman of HLCIT, Mr. Saroj Devkota, Member Secretary, Dr. Madan Prasad Pariyar and Full Time Member, Mr. Manohar Bhattarai.

Meeting proceedings:

The meeting proceedings are as follows:

1. Mr. Bal Krishna Bal, Project Manager, Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya presented on the prime agendas of the meeting, which had been forwarded to all invitees of the meeting in advance.
2. Mr. Dhak Prasad Uprety a.k.a Bishnu presented on his keyboard layout and software, Devanagari Keyboard Layout (DP).
3. Discussions and conclusions made:
 - 3.1. It was agreed that standardization of existing or to be developed keyboard layout and software is very much necessary.
 - 3.2. Besides the three known keyboard layouts, respectively, the Nepali Unicode Keyboard Layout (Traditional), Nepali Unicode Keyboard Layout (Romanized) and Devanagari Keyboard Layout (DP), there are other keyboard layouts and software currently in use or under development in Nepal.
 - 3.3. It was recommended that the government authority formed an expert committee to analyze on the necessity of keyboard layout standardizations and in doing so study the practices in the neighbouring India in this direction. The same expert committee would recommend the government authority on the set of criteria for the standard keyboard layout(s).
4. For meeting the purpose of clause 3.3, it was agreed that NLIT would forward a list of nominees for the expert committee to HLCIT.
5. Call a bid for the submission of all the existing keyboard layouts from any individual or organizations. For this, NLIT would publish a “CALL FOR PROPOSALS” within one week

of the meeting date.

List of the names of the participants of the meeting

1. Mr. Saroj Devkota, Vice Chairman HLCIT.
2. Dr. Madan Prasad Pariyar, Member Secretary, HLCIT.
3. Mr. Manohar Bhattarai, Full Time Member, HLCIT.
4. Mr. Ram Sharan Pandey, Chairman NLIT.
5. Mr. Kedar Sharma, Member Secretary, NLIT.
6. Dr. Subarna Shakya, Director, National Information Technology Center (NITC).
7. Mr. Baldev Prasad Joshi, Under Secretary, Ministry of General Administration, Nepal Government.
8. Mr. Sanat Bista, Assistant Professor, Kathmandu University.
9. Mr. Ajit Acharya, Program Officer, E-network Research and Development (ENRD).
10. Mr. Binod Dhakal, Computer Association Nepal (CAN).
11. Mr. Ram Sharan Gayak, NITC.
12. Mr. Hira Gopal Maharjan, NITC.
13. Mr. Ramesh Pokharel, NITC.
14. Mr. Subir B. Pradhanang, President, FOSS-Nepal Community.
15. Mr. Bal Krishna Bal, Project Manager, Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya (MPP).
16. Ms. Srishtee Gurung, Project Manager, MPP.
17. Mr. Basanta Shrestha, Senior Developer, MPP.
18. Mr. Laxmi Khatiwada, Linguist, MPP.
19. Mr. Dibyendra Hyoju, Senior Developer, MPP.
20. Mr. Dhak Prasad Uprety, Devanagari Keyboard Layout Creator.

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