

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

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Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya

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Main Agenda – “PAN L10n Project - Achievements and Impacts, the Road Ahead”

Achievements:

1. Local language computing expertise(probably the best localization experts in the whole of south and south east Asia)
2. Awareness about Local language computing and Free and Open Source Software
3. Localized Operating System in Nepali – NepaLinux, several other localized applications
4. Foundations of Natural Language Processing(NLP) set (Development of both the Resources and the Applications)

Impacts:

1. NepaLinux installed and trained in already ten telecenters. Sixteen more centers in the pipeline.
2. NepaLinux – a viable alternative to bridge the digital divide caused by the language barrier “English”
3. Debates and exercises on Standardization for localization from the Policy Making Level
4. Inclusion of “Computational Linguistics” and “Speech and Natural Language Processing” courses in the Universities of Nepal

Road Ahead:

1. Further research and develop from the available resources and applications
2. Develop a collaborative atmosphere so that support from the Government, Non-government and other sectors could be sought
3. Further strengthening the existing network of intellectuals and key persons in the South and South East region developed under the framework of PAN L10n for the larger interests and benefits of the development of Language Technologies in Nepal.

Minutes of the meeting proceedings

Mr. Amar Gurung briefed the agendas of the meeting. This was followed by the discussions from the floor. Given below are some highlights of the discussions.

- Free & Open Source Software (FOSS) can be used for local language computing.
- We must make policy making bodies and the Ministry of Science and Technology more aware about the local language computing. Only then government will be able to include it in the IT Policy. Although FOSS has been already included in the new IT Policy, it is yet to be approved by the cabinet.
- Nepali Unicode has been already approved as a standard for developing and exchanging electronic documents in government institutions.
- NITC has been providing basic IT training(Nepali Unicode typing among others) to the government officials.
- The Central Department of Linguistics (CDL), Tribhuvan University is interested to install Nepalinix in it's department. For this, it seeks support from MPP.
- Women from different telecentres are generally not getting much chances to participate in the different activities organized under the PAN Localization Project because of their household and other social issues.
- In order to continue Research and Development to the works done by MPP under PAN and other language technology projects, it was suggested that MPP forged working alliance or Memory of Understanding (MoU) with established research institutions like the Universities (Tribhuvan University (TU), Kathmandu University(KU)) and or Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).
- National Information Technology Center (NITC) is open to acting as a central data repository of the resources and applications developed at MPP under PAN and other language technology projects under its Data Center.
- While language technology does not fall under the working scope of Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA), it is quite positive to any of the initiatives taken by the language technology related projects as the issue of content is really a crucial issue in the proliferation of wider connectivity and access to the rural population in particular.

List of names of the participants of the meeting

1. Dr. Subarna Shakya, Executive Director, National Information Technology Center (NITC).
2. Mr. Ananda Raj Khanal, Director and Secretary, Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA).
3. Prof. Dr. Yogendra Yadava, Head of Department, Central Department of Linguistics, TU, Kirtipur, Kathmandu.

- 4.** Prof. Patrick A.V. Hall. Department of Computer Science and Engineering, KU, Dhulikhel, Kavre, Nepal.
- 5.** Mr. Sanat Kumar Bista. Department of Computer Science and Engineering, KU, Dhulikhel, Kavre, Nepal.
- 6.** Mr. Bal Krishna Bal. Department of Computer Science and Engineering, KU, Dhulikhel, Kavre, Nepal.
- 7.** Ms. Bidya Bhattarai, Researcher, E-networking Research and Development (ENRD).
- 8.** Ms. Ambika Timila, Researcher, E-networking Research and Development (ENRD).
- 9.** Mr. Amar Gurung, Director, MPP, Lalitpur, PatanDhoka, Nepal.
- 10.** Mr. Dibyendra Hyoju, Director IT, MPP, Lalitpur, PatanDhoka, Nepal.
- 11.** Mr. Vijay Shrestha, Manager IT, MPP, Lalitpur, PatanDhoka, Nepal.