

School turns Free Software evangelist



Tucked away in the little village of Irimpanam, 3 km away from Thripunithura, the headquarters of the erstwhile Cochin royal family, a school is championing the cause of freedom in computing.

Vocational Higher Secondary School (VHSS)

Irimpanam is in many respects, the regular

Malayalam medium school in the state. But this

unassuming school is fast becoming a free software

knowledge hub for schools in Kerala.

VHSS made history a year ago with a few other schools when it set up a website. This was long before there was an official decision to introduce websites for schools. It was at one of the workshops organised by SPACE that the VHSS teachers learnt how to set up a website. Till today vhsirimpanam.org is one of the well maintained sites of schools in Kerala. So rare was the feat that the school was invited to present its website at the National Conference on Free Software held at Ernakulam in November 2008.

Although the teachers had been using free software for several years, web development using Wordpress, the free software content management system brought them closer home to lesser known facts about freedoms in computing. They began organising workshops for students and teachers on FOSS and new media. The school launched an initiative called *Swathanthra Software Kuttaima* (Free Software Community) for FOSS awareness among students. It networks with Indian Libre Users Group Kochi (Ilug Kochi) for conducting training programmes.