

Kannada goes global on the Internet

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BANGALORE: Here's something for all die-hard Kannadigas to gloat about. Kannada has gone global and is on the Internet, never mind all the detractors who said the script was too complicated for the Net. What's more, it will be a major feature of a two-day seminar on "Kannada and computers" scheduled for Thursday.

Even though three persons have attempted this, Padakis Display Systems can boast of trying to bridge the emotional gap for 'anivasi Kannadigas,' as non-resident Kannadigas call themselves. The homepage provided by the Padakis, deals with news relating to Kannada culture and art.

Everyday, Kannada dailies are scanned and a few items picked up. A team redesigns the material to make it crisp and interesting. The day's items are uploaded at 6.30 p.m., just in time to catch Kannadigas in USA and other countries at their breakfast table.

The Padakis are targeting 'anivasi Kannadigas' since they are the ones who are looking for such snippets from their homeland. Says the person behind the project, Muralidhar Padaki: "We wanted to cash in on their emotional vacuum. It seems to be working."

The three-month old homepage is slowly gaining ground going by the E-mail pouring in from Montreal, California, and even Singapore.

All this is for free. He is also offering the Kannada font free of cost, which can be downloaded.

But what is in it for him? Nothing, actually. Rather, he has spent a tidy sum setting it up. "But it is very satisfying to know that I am able to bridge an emotional gap for people out there," he says.

A popular Kannada evening daily and another person from Mumbai, Dr Pavanaja, are also doing the same, but Mr Padaki feels his homepage is different and versatile. The daily just scans its paper and downloads it onto the Net, while Dr Pavanaja puts out a monthly feature magazine.

"The problem is that it takes about 60 to 75 seconds, sometimes

even more, for a user to download the page put by the daily. Valuable time is lost, while ours is in text format and takes just a few seconds. Besides, the paper is not selective."

Mr Padaki also provides advance information about visits of important cultural personalities to USA, and is acting as a communication link between NRIs and the Kannada University in Hampi for educational trips. He will be travelling to Hampi this weekend to put Prasiddha Foundation's two-day music and dance festival, Vijayotsava, on the Net.

Mr Padaki will deliver a demonstration-lecture as part of the seminar on Friday. His website address is <http://www.mybangalore.com>.

Kannada daily goes on the Internet

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Our Staff Correspondent
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UDAYVANI, a Kannada daily belonging to the Manipal group, is the first Kannada newspaper to have gone on the Internet.

The software package from the Bangalore-based Software Research Group (SRG) makes it possible for users to read the Kannada script. Padaki iNett Value Pvt Ltd, the company which hosts *Udayvani*, has entered into a royalty-based agreement with SRG and users can download the software free of cost from the Net.

However, to put something on the Net, the user will have to invest in an editor, which Padaki is marketing. Aimed at bringing home closer to NRIs, the company has also set up a Web site of its own, mybangalore.com, where it puts up news bits of cultural and social interests. Currently, the five-month-old site boasts around 10,000 hits per day.

According to Mr. Muralidhar Padaki, there are around 75,000 to one lakh NRIs from Karnataka. The company's Web site contains information in both Kannada and English.

Emphasising his commitment to the promotion of culture, Mr. Padaki said the company planned to create free home pages for eminent personalities from the state. For starters, the company has already created a home page for Dr. Aralimalige Parthasarthy, the management guru. He also has an E-mail facility that helps people keep in touch with him as well as allowing him to plan his international lectures more efficiently. The company is planning to extend the offer to other cultural VIPs.

It has also provided free home pages to institutions such as the Spastics Society, MES College and the Karnataka University.

The company is now working on filling yet another information gap, details of wedding halls, hotels and party halls available in Bangalore. NRIs who want halls for various functions are expected to welcome such information at their fingertips, including their price and location, making them independent of their friends and relatives in India.

For the present the company is concentrating on making the site popular. Later, it expects to make it commercial.