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**Goa's first computerised village library in Loliem**

26 Jan 2009, 03:43 hrs IST, Gauree Malkarriekar, TNN

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PANAJI: A population of around 5,000 living in and around the rural region of Mashem and Loliem in Canacona might have to travel on foot to read the book of their choice, but they have been walking into a computerised library since January 4, 2009.

Omkar Village Library in Loliem has become the first village library in the state to be computerised. That too, using E-Granthalaya, the software designed by National Informatics Centre, New Delhi and first used to computerize the state central library.

Just the name of the writer or the subject of the book enables readers from the rural area to find the book they need out of the 5,361 books at the library.

What's more, in the absence of the librarian the readers will be able to use

the lone computer at the library to locate books, but under the watchful eyes of the library attendant.

The library belongs to Omkar Khel and Sanskritik Mandal of Loliem and was inaugurated on January 1, 2009, four days before its computerization.

They have another library at Mashem, Canacona, in operation since December 2004 and in the process of being computerised.

The organization's president, Rajashri Pagi said, "We have a minimum of 30 visitors a day. Our two libraries are the only ones in Loliem, Mashem catering to a population of 5,000. In a rural area such as this, since our first library was opened in 2004 reading has become a major hobby."

Pagi informs that the libraries have locals walking for over two to four kilometres daily to borrow a book or read newspapers, the region having irregular frequency of public transport.

The libraries are provided an annual grant of Rs 60,000 under a scheme of the Central Library, which is used to add to the libraries collection of books in Hindi, Konkani, Marathi and English.

Panaji based organisation Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Gomant Marathi Academy and Konkani Bhasha Mandal also keep adding to the village library's versatile collection making the task of locating books more tougher by the day.

"It's much easier now for our librarian to locate a book merely on the subject or writer's name," said Pagi.

Curator of Central Library, Carlos Fernandes, who inaugurated the new software at the library said, "The software is very simple to use even by readers. I noticed that the locals were all well-read because of the library and local school authorities, residents and students were very keen on it being computerized. They were also present in large numbers at the inauguration."

He informed that the library was first a government library and was allotted by the Directorate of Art and Culture as per state guidelines to the local organisation to improve its conditions.

Omkar is the only rural library to use the software with assistance from the Central Library. Besides the Central Library, this software is presently used in probably only one college library in Margao.

Searches for a book provides the best matched results and the classified numbers against the book name enables the librarian to spot the cupboard where the book is placed. The records also indicate who and when the book has been borrowed.

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