O n 16 February we left Kathmandu for our destination: Tehrathum in eastern Nepal. After six days, we were forced to backtrack 1,000 km across Nepal to Butwal. There, we stopped because finally we could go no further.

We avoided the Prithibi Highway by taking the unconventional route to Hetauda via Dakhsinkali. At Kulekhani, an army sentry told us we were the only car he’d seen that day. The Tribhuban Highway in Bhairah was empty. There were some motorcycles in Hetauda but no cars.

The next morning, we passed a convoy of 50 tankers and trucks escorted by an army mine-protected vehicle. At Pataliya junction, we were waved on at the checkpoint: only press and ambulances were being allowed unescorted.

We passed patrols clearing tree trunks from the road and saw only two passenger buses on the 50 km stretch to Nigad. Joined by a tractor full of merry marriage-goers we reached a deserted Chandra Nighapur in time for lunch. A landmine on the Kamala Bridge had just been defused, we pressed on towards Lahan and didn’t see a single vehicle till Itahari.

Turning north we got into Dhanan. A journey that would normally have taken 12 hours had already lasted two full days. The next morning we heard that the Dhankuta road was blocked by booby-trapped power pylons, but we drove up to Bhedetar thinking we could still make it to Tehrathum. Not possible, so we headed back towards Itahari. East of Itahari, there were only two passenger buses on the 50 km stretch to Nijgad. Joined by a tractor full of merry marriage-goers we reached a deserted Chandra Nighapur in time for lunch. A landmine on the Kamala Bridge had just been defused, we pressed on towards Lahan and didn’t see a single vehicle till Itahari.

By now we had no destination, we were wandering aimlessly around Nepal. Continuing westwards the next morning we passed a long line of trucks, buses and taxis near Lalbandi all moving at the same speed. It looked like a long train being pulled by an armoured personnel carrier.

We talked our way past checkpoints, defied warnings and risked going to Birganj by nightfall. The next day we headed north towards Bharatpur, the road was clear but there were checkpoints every step of the way. At Lothar there was another convoy of vehicles headed in the opposite direction. An army Alouette hovered overhead. We wanted to turn off and go back to Kathmandu but the road was blocked at Krishna Bhir. What to do?

We headed west, past heavy army patrols and convoys and several long-distance rickshaws carrying cargo from Narayanghat to Butwal, a distance of 100 km. Rotten tomatoes had been dumped by the roadside by farmers who couldn’t take them to market.

At Kawasaki, a roadside resident was sick of it all: “At night the Maoists force us to pile rocks on the road, by day the soldiers come and tell us to clear them.”

From Butwal we could go no further, the road to Lamahi and Pokhara were both blocked. A highway allows you to get to your destination, it is not by itself a destination. If you are a traveler on Nepal’s roads these days, having a destination you can reach is a luxury.
I am confident that the current carrot-and-stick approach will soon allow us to locate the mool and futao it. And before long, we will have attained Asian standards and won’t even know it. But no one is saying it’s going to be easy; there is a huge backlog of competing demands that need to be addressed so the need of the hour is to itemise, prioritise and realise. So we will not tolerate any pussy-footing as we take on these jobs on a war-footing. Having canvassed the opinion of some friends and colleagues, here is our list of must-do items in reverse order of urgency:

1. All billboards to be taken down by Shivaratri, except the ones that exhort us in broad daylight to ‘Go Get the Balls’ and a booze ad that categorically states ‘There Is Nothing As Satisfying As a Virgin’. These two have become important tourist attractions at Bagmati Bridge and should be left intact.
2. Speaking of the Bagmati, as the mercury climbs the aroma wafting up from the river is now a fine bouquet that reminds us of socks in an advanced stage of fermentation. We must leave the Bagmati alone because it drowns out other localised urban odours.
3. It is difficult to get out to Dhorpatan these days, so we should once and for all turn Koteswor Triangle into a wildlife sanctuary and declare it the Royal Tin Kune National Park. Chitwan rhinos can then be translocated right inside the Ring Road.
4. At the rate we are going, the municipality will soon run out of streets to span with overhead pedestrian crossings, so in response to popular demand from Thimi residents an overhead bridge will be built over the airport runway to make it easier for commuters.
5. The special commission could offer bribes to selected officials so they won’t be corrupt anymore.
Golfing dreams

With the Himalayan Bank Cup it won’t be long before we have our own champions

I long before we have our own champions

With the Himalayan Bank Cup it won’t be long.

It won’t be long.

corporations joining the bandwagon for sports other than golf also.

Cup in this Open Golf Championship. We look forward to other amateurs will once again compete for the coveted Himalayan Bank Thapa Magar were runners-up respectively. On Saturday, the money was earned for all except the last two places. I won the game purse of Rs 150,000. The winner bagged Rs 55,000 and the prize included avid golfers such as Ashoke Rana, Prachanda B Shrestha, and Bijay B Shrestha. Together with other board members, they have realised the need to support excellence in a sport and have taken the initiative to combine sensible corporate strategy with doing something extra for the country. This addition of an extra four-day initiative to combine sensible corporate strategy with doing something extra for the country. This addition of an extra four-day tournament for top amateurs and professionals goes a long way towards creating sustainable development of golf in Nepal.

Nepali professional golfers and I competed for a total purse of Rs 150,000. The winner bagged Rs 55,000 and the prize money was earned for all except the last two places. I won the game with a score of 287 (one under par). Ramesh Nagarkoti and Deepak Thapa Magar were runners-up respectively. On Saturday, the amateurs will once again compete for the coveted Himalayan Bank Cup in this Open Golf Championship. We look forward to other corporations joining the bandwagon for sports other than golf also. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I don’t want to miss my tee time.

An amateur rider follows her instructor at the Chandra Riding Centre.

Kingdom for a horse

If you ever had a passion for riding, here’s your chance

Equestrian sports in Nepal used to be confined to the elite, the army and the police until Chandra Riding Centre opened in 2001. Rajib Shah came up with the idea when his wife Shivani, an excellent and avid rider, needed somewhere to practice.

Nepal had never seen a racecourse or been particularly keen on promoting equestrian interests—except once a year on Ghode Jatra. That is why Chandra was set up to instil a love for riding and horses. Rajib and Shishir Chandra Shah wanted to encourage fellow Nepalis to learn this new skill and add a bit more pizzazz to their lives.

The school started with only six thoroughbreds brought in from Jaipur and special instructors. This was an elaborate venture and required much investment of time, effort and money. After all, it wasn’t easy to find proper instructors, maintain a full-fledged stable and have a vet on standby while promoting a pioneering riding school—all at the same time.

But the school, after a brief warm-up cantor is off to a full gallop. The number of homes doubled to 12 and there are plenty of people willing to learn to ride. Even though Rajib dreams of introducing the sport to Nepalis there were only a limited number of locals who came and most of his customers were expatriates and their children. Shah later introduced the riding centre to local schools and children were brought in large groups for 40 minutes to an hour-long class. This proved to be of limited use since a class of 25-30 children within an hour resulted in the horses getting overworked and the children learning precious little.

Rajib Shah wishes that schools would send smaller groups and parents would take a special interest in their children’s activities. “It is a beautiful and educational sport. Not only do children get exercise and learn proper posture but they also overcome their fear of animals. It also makes them more confident and responsible,” he says. His own two-and-a-half years old daughter, Yashaswini, rides with an instructor or her parents.

Rajib blames the restricted attention span of Nepalis for the lack of passion in riding. Horse riding is a sport that requires rigorous training and commitment. Haphazard handling of horses can result in accidents.

Shah plans to introduce new schemes to attract potential riders like the carriage facility so locals can book for weddings as well as other events and add grandeur to functions. A new and reduced price scheme is being introduced. He plans to promote sightseeing on horses in the early morning hours. The sightseeing trip is for people who want a feel of old Nepal as they, like kings, astride their horses cantered through the courtyards of Patan or Kathmandu. Patan and Kathmandu By Night is targeted at those who wish to have a romantic dinner and then drive around the city in a carriage with their loved ones. Shah also plans to promote trail riding during weekends to break the monotony of just riding around the arena for riders with a little more experience. So bring out the cowboy in you, put on your spurs and tally-ho.

Deepak Acharya won the Himalayan Bank Cup with a score of 287 (one-under par).

You may recall that along with last year’s tournament, Himalayan Bank created a golf development fund, the first of its kind in Nepal. They have recently used it to support our new and upcoming amateur golfer Biba Ram Shrestha for his training in India. One gets to understand how important golf is in the corporate world when we look at the board of the sponsoring bank, which includes avid golfers such as Ashoke Rana, Prachanda B Shrestha, and Bijay B Shrestha. Together with other board members, they have realised the need to support excellence in a sport and have taken the initiative to combine sensible corporate strategy with doing something extra for the country. This addition of an extra four-day tournament for top amateurs and professionals goes a long way towards creating sustainable development of golf in Nepal.

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Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu. prodeepak@hotmail.com

AARTI BASNYAT

Rajib Shah poses with one of his horses.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.
It's now getting on to 25 days since the royal proclamation. Far be it from us to say how things have happened in that period. If we as a free people, couldn't tell you. There will be those entrusted with the duty of providing security and ensuring development who are much more clued in.

Our correspondent who roved the highways from east to west (see p7) this week describes an immobilised nation. Tens of thousands of people are stranded for weeks in highways towns, villagers are forced to walk ancient disused trails across the mountains, peddickers are in some cases simply abandoned highways.

It is clear that the rebels have now gone beyond caring about public opinion. Their actions point to total indifference to what the people might think. There was no sign of the mass movement filling the empty highways, setting fire to ambulances, opening fire on bus passengers and sniping shooting at anything that moves. Turning into what they consider the last lap, they are forcing the people to spend panic and frustration as so to prove things aren't better for the people post-February First.

But the next uprising may very well be against them. Dalekhe in December and Kapila Bastu last week showed what can happen by neglecting public opinion and perpetrating atrocities. The people always know who their tormentors are, sooner or later they will not be able to stand it any longer and will rise up.

For now, the Maoist leadership is sitting back and watching Kathmandu stew. And they pat themselves on their backs reading the announcement of an arms embargo. Things are going pretty much according to plan for them.

We will have to wait and see how long the patience of Nepal's urban dwellers will hold out. But we expect the commanders are astute enough to realise that there is no military solution to this conflict and it could last for years and they will only win if they hold on, till then? Will the internal dynamics of the party keep it cohesive for that long? And if what we see and hear today is the reaction to a return to authoritarianism, imagine the international outrage that will greet totalitarianism.

Improbable as it may seem, February First has actually given the rebels an unexpected opportunity. They now have a messaged them up, but they are still the only entities that don't own the survival to the barrel of a gun. This is the time for all forces that want change to address the structural problems in the polity to ensure long-term peace and development. It's still not too late for democracy and a progressive, enlightened monarchy to co-exist and take us together.

Nepali Times: It has been reported in the Indian media that you returned from Delhi this week carrying a message for His Majesty the King from the Indian foreign minister. What is the gist of it?

Shiv Shankar Mukherjee: I'm not physically odering the message. In New Delhi, I met the prime minister, external affairs minister, foreign secretary. I was basically told to reinforce the message that was already given in our very first statement, which is that we continue to see this as a setback to democracy, we continue to ask for the reinstatement of the leaders of the political parties, resumption of the democratic process, removal of obstacles to freedom, including the freedom of the press, and to build a broad national consensus to get back to the major challenges facing Nepal which is the insurgencies and development. That continues to be our position.

His Majesty said in his royal proclamation he was forced to act because of the inability of the political parties to unite against themselves and against the Maoists.

Our government has very carefully considered the situation here, including the royal proclamation of 1 February. My government disagrees with the position that by taking the stand that we have, we are strengthening the insurgency. Quite the contrary. The takeover on 1 February was in fact the act that removed the political parties which were the buffer between the constitutional forces and the Maoists. It has in fact emboldened the Maoists. The situation can be remedied even at this stage by a return to what we think is the correct condition for ending the insurgency with the help of the people: constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy.

Nepal is in a make-or-break situation. Since the king now is the presiding CEO, there are a few more measures he should take: a) The commission he formed to look into corruption should give individuals chance to voluntarily return their wealth, and the commission should act fast and not get bogged down in lengthy court battles which could totally undermine its credibility. b) All elected officials from the past 20 years should be put to the test by putting sanctions and embargoes. Your well heeded call has not been heard by India, UK, Denmark and Switzerland even as we speak. Unfortunately, these acts now only push Nepal's current government towards China. India and the West want Nepal to have a constitutional monarchy and a multiparty democracy which is a noble goal. However democracy cannot be forced upon the people of Nepal. It has to be home grown from the grassroots. It seems like the need to realise that sometimes their version of democracy is not a good fit for local problems, and third world countries should be left alone to act in their countries' best interests. I couldn't agree more with Saubhagy Shaha. Thank you west and the, but let us solve our problems ourselves now.

Your editorial ('Been there, done that', #235) cautioned the international community and donors not to punish the Nepalese people by withholding aid, putting sanctions and embargoes. Your well heeded call has not been heard by India, UK, Denmark and Switzerland even as we speak. Unfortunately, these acts now only push Nepal's current government towards China. India and the West want Nepal to have a constitutional monarchy and a multiparty democracy which is a noble goal. However democracy cannot be forced upon the people of Nepal. It has to be home grown from the grassroots. It seems like the
opinion, we express it as clearly and as unambiguously as we can. We are abundantly clear that the assistance will be available in full measure, as we believe that the social parties will be able to re-establish the working relationship that has been in abeyance.

The envoys are back after consultations. The dust is settling in Kathmandu. Everyone, including the Maoists, is watching and waiting. The envoys have come and gone. In cyberspace, international activist and rights groups have been in a combative mood and it is there that once more there is a sense of hope and the sense of a new world order.

STATE OF THE STATE

Again we are obliged to use this space to debunk the myth of the failed state. Proponents of the status quo insist that the state can’t hold it if it isn’t propped up pronto from outside. Those opposed insist that putting it will push the state towards a situation of economic stagnation. In the confusion, the inherent contradiction in the expression “failed state” is lost. Everyone who has failed isn’t a state anymore. A “failed state” is an oxymoron.

A state is in trouble when it loses its capacity to provide its second stage, its ability to enforce the rule of law is venalized. Further deterioration leads to non-state actors (insurgents, extremists, the mafia) to become too powerful to be subdued by the coercive arm of the state. Direct or indirect interference by the international community then becomes inevitable as the conflict spirals out of control. The inability to deal with cross-border links, as the Maoists undoubtedly do, they jeopardize regional stability. Like it or not, Nepal is a global issue.

Nira Poudel, email

It might inspire my wife and three sons to visit the holy land. The verse “To the mountain, to the mountain...” (writ by John Piercy, I think) comes to mind. The verse says, “To the mountain, to the mountain... you have to climb it.” The same goes for the mountains in Nepal. You have to climb them to appreciate its beauty.

SN Singh, email

It is surprising that even CK Lal (First, the good news, #235) is now writing about the need to get back to the grassroots development journalism. Can’t agree more. You should take his advice and highlights stories like the uprising of the Dailekhis on the front page instead of relegating it to a small brief on page 5 (Dailekhi deft, #225). The need of the day is to bring back peace and stability. Without stability there will be neither a prosperity, hence democracy at the earliest possible time. If the people do not pull up their sleeves and get back to the grassroots development journalism, the Dailekhis did even 500,000 troops will not be able to succeed. Humanitarian assistance and human rights issues will most certainly remain the central concerns of every donor. They are answerable not to us but to their constituencies back home who don’t understand the nature of the conflict in some boondocks. Such assistance has to be cautiously welcomed.

Comrade Madhab (Fourth, #236) has made a very important point that without agreement with China, solutions remain in the quagmire. Is there agreement with China?

STA TE OF THE ST A TE

The story on biogas by Naresh Newar was refreshing (‘Nepal’s future is in the dung heap’, #234). It is bearing with hope and possibilities of better times. All Nepalis should actively engage in exploring such possibilities in these hard times. We can only keep it alive by not forgetting. Dhiraj Sharma, Latvia University, USA

Shrinkhala Sharma’s Nepal Pan column (‘23 weeks to go’, #234) has written about the very essentials of objective, holistic and no-nonsense journalism that I have been trying to instill in young reporters for years. She literally took the words off my mouth. Her write-up should be the introduction as well as concluding part of all journalism curriculum and training workshop and also the follow-up manual for editors.

Peter J Karnthak, The Kathmandu Post/City Editor

Being meant to congratulate you on the excellent anti-corruption issues of the Nepal Times. The Nepali media may have lost its freedom, but it hasn’t lost any of its bite. Your past ten editorials (234, 230) have been bold and beautiful, especially considering they were written while under the censor’s sword.

Nira Poudel, email

The piece by Manisha Aryal (‘Radio activity’ #235) on your online edition touched my heart. It also made me feel proud, again, about being Nepali. It was all about the ‘knowledge’ one can remember is that it was about a mountain, a very beautiful, especially considering they were written while under the censor’s sword.

Gary Benn, gary.benn@homecall.co.uk

What a heartwarming story on the power of rural radio by Manisha Aryal. Anyone who wants to see the absurdity of the bar on rural FM should read this piece. It proves that by stopping news and information by radio the government is not just hurting the people but also harming us. The counter-insurgency strategy because the information gap is being filled by negative rumours and rebel propaganda.

Name withheld, email

POM

In 1992 it was my pleasure to visit your country and travel extensively. While staying in Pokhara, I trekked along the Ghentrape circuit. That trek and, indeed, my entire stay in Nepal is emblazoned in my memory. In Pokhara I read a poem which I can’t perfectly recall. What I remember is that it was about a mountain, a very moving summation of what a mountain is all about. It was all about the knowledge one can have of a mountain: to know its size, you must see it from afar appreciate its height you have to bear such things as weather and...
The timing of the present crisis couldn’t have been worse. February First happened just as bookings for the spring trekking season were firming up and the travel trade was looking forward to recovering losses of the past years. Although there was a 12 percent increase in tourist arrivals last year with 380,000 visitors, it was still way below the 1998 peak of 500,000. Now, things are gloomy again. There have been mass cancellations after news of the king’s move and the subsequent Maoist blockade of highways. January had already shown a 16 percent drop compared to January 2004 and February’s figures are expected to be worse. After the emergency was declared, Kathmandu-based embassies have upgraded their travel advisories. Even the French, who have been the most laissez-faire about advisories on Nepal have posted warnings, mainly because of communication difficulties after 1 February. "We have given up hope for this spring season," says Trekking Agents’ Association Nepal (TAAN) President Deepak Mahat, "Now all we can do is hope for the best for the autumn season." Trekking agents have received mass cancellations by groups booked for the March-May Season and the only people still coming are individual travellers who in any case are not deterred by advisories. Worst hit have been Indian tourists because of the continued coverage of the Nepal crisis in the Indian media. Even Indian gamers who used to frequent Kathmandu’s casinos are thin on the ground. People coming overland from India has plummeted to zero. The army is ready to take the tourist vehicles in convoys," said an NTB official, "But tourists normally don’t agree to move like that.” The tourism multiplier benefited everyone from taxi drivers in Kathmandu to Nepal’s national parks, tea shop owners along trails and even Maoists who taxed hikers. Now, with trekkers down to a trickle, everyone is hit. The only ones who have come out unscathed are domestic private airlines which are now negotiating for dollar-paying tourists with a record numbers of passengers because of blockade. But international airlines have suffered. Qatar Airways brought only five passengers from Malaysia on a flight this week, although its Doha flights are full. Cosmic Air flew only 12 passengers to Dhaka on the same day. Sahar Air suspended flights and is due to resume only on 15 March. Austrian Airlines has suspended flights for March. Airlines that used to depend on tourists are turning now to ferrying Nepali migrant workers to the Gulf. In 2004, scheduled to begin Bangkok-Kathmandu-Dubai flights next month is doing just that. Although the Sagarmathas, Manang and Mustang regions are trouble-free, tour operators are finding it hard to convince visitors that trips will not be disrupted. Among those still braving it are tourists from other conflict zones like Israel who don’t pay attention to advisories any more. In 2004, Nepal had 108 percent more Israeli tourists compared to the previous year. The only hope for tour operators now is Tibet. There is heavy booking for spring into the monsoon for Lhasa-bound Kathmandu stopovers. “Tibet is looking good,” says NATTA Vice President Damu Narayan Shrestha. “The fact that Kathmandu is ok is spreading through word-of-mouth. We are going to amplify this good news through a travel mart here.” Even so, the Maoist blockade of the Arni Road since 1 February has hurt overlanders and many have had to be ferried to and from Tatopani by helicopter.

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Trekking to a trickle
The current crisis couldn’t have come at a worse time for tourism

The tourism slump has hit Pokhara badly. Last year it was Matter activity on the Annapurna trek circuit, then it was the bandas, now it’s the post-February First blockade which has affected especially Indian tourists to what used to be a favourite honeymoon destination. A dozen hotels along Pokhara’s once-bustling lakeshore have closed shop in the past month. Others have been locked out by the banks. Chautari Hotel has been closed by dawn by Nabil Bank because it couldn’t pay back Rs 10.3 million it borrowed. "We had no choice," said Nabil’s Sanjib Pyakurel. Even the five-star Fulbari Resort has been getting frequent summons from its bankers. Electricity and telephone lines have already been cut, yet the hotel remains open. “The bankers would love to close down my hotel,” too, says a defiant Piyush Amatya of Fulbari, “but they can’t touch me, after all if there were three good seasons, I could pay back all my loans.”

However, there is no sign of the tourists returning anytime soon. Pokhara depends mostly on trekking traffic and there have been heavy group cancellations for the spring season. Dejected, the owners of ‘Triggar’, Thorang-La, Saine, Pumori, Mandala and Besaga resort have all closed down. Atheeteg, banks have invested Rs 20 billion in some 300 Pokhara hotel properties. Hoteliers say they have been ruined, the banks are doing very well for themselves. “Just because some hoteliers are well-off, banks should not be closing down all hotels,” says hotelier Sunita Kumar Shrestha. “The situation affects everyone and the day will come when the banks will also go bankrupt.” As hotels close, downstream businesses like plywood farmers, vegetable vendors, dairy farmers and transporters are all hit. “Even store owners have lost faith in us,” says Hari Gurung of the Hotel Association of Nepal.
Crisis management
Managing business in times of insurgency

Peter Drucker in Managing in Turbulent Times written 20 years ago couldn’t have envisaged Nepal today. But he gives us enough hope on how to deal with the unknown. The Harvard Business Review compendium Managing in the New Economy lists the challenges ahead in the 21st century. While outsourcing trade—beware. Nepal’s small manufacturing base will erode further with the supply chain and distribution disruptions as well as labour-security related issues. New opportunities in trading will emerge as security spending increases. With the government as a major procurement entity, new vistas will open up. The need to understand the corridors of power and its linkages will be even more important than before. Spending on recession will increase as the cash-rich youth try to escape the depressing reality. The movement of the rural population to urban areas and the urban to migration will keep manpower agencies busy. New markets like eastern Europe and managers will be sucked into the whirlpool of khatam-cha myopia. Innovations will emerge in terms of selling products or transporting them. Dairy farmers will start processing cheese as milk can be taken to markets and tomato growers will contemplate diversification into sauce and puree. The firms that understand their consumer best will rule as the consumer psychograph will change rapidly and shift in perceptions continue. Any product or service associated with hope will do well, therefore instant noodles, beer and alcohol manufacturers need not worry. The biggest challenge the country will be managing its image. Apart from the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the

Lawrence flies from SQ to cosmic

Nepali Times: Why did you choose to return to Nepal and work with Cosmic Air?
Lawrence KC Liew: I thought I could retire from Singapore Airlines and age gracefully but then I missed the thrill of being in the airlines business. When Cosmic called, I decided it was better than sitting home and watching it. After all, I have been here before so I know what the situation is despite negative reports. I knew it was safe so I wasn’t worried.

Why did Singapore Airlines pull out of Nepal?
Security was a major concern. Shortly after 11 September, there were a few arrests made in Singapore of a Muslim fundamentalist group, which is a branch of the al Qaeda. There was specific threat that they were going to hijack an SQ plane and ram it into one of the high-rise buildings of Singapore. The company felt it had to pull out of Kathmandu.

What are Cosmic’s future plans?
Even as we speak now the third Fokker 100 is doing its test flights in Kathmandu. We should have the plane here by Sunday or Monday.

Are poor ground handling and small domestic terminals a problem for your jets?
These are the limitations we face at this point. Our Fokker 100 will be due for checks and we don’t have a hangar big enough to conduct it thoroughly. With permission from the Royal Nepal Airline, we have borrowed their hangar to check one aircraft at a time. Our next project will be to build a hangar of our own. Other limitations are parking. When our fourth Fokker arrives, we wonder where we’re going to park it at night.

How about runway length in Nepalganj, Bhairawa and Biratnagar?
We have tried and proven that the runway can accept our aircraft. There is no shortage of runway space elsewhere but we would not be operating there. Safety has always been our top priority. That’s why we did a test flight to Pokhara last week. When we get permission, we will use only 60 percent of the aircraft payload.

Are you filling seats?
Tourist traffic has dipped but Indian tourists are coming. Are you filling seats? Security was a major concern. Shortly after 11 September, there were a few arrests made in Singapore of a Muslim fundamentalist group, which is a branch of the al Qaeda. There was specific threat that they were going to hijack an SQ plane and ram it into one of the high-rise buildings of Singapore. The company felt it had to pull out of Kathmandu.

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Are you filling seats?
Tourist traffic has dipped but Indian tourists are coming back. We need serious promotional campaigns to get people to believe in the safety and relative security of Nepal. My job is to identify the potential for which tourists would want to come to Kathmandu. With blockades, more and more people will not fly. It isn’t just Nepalis, even tourists prefer travelling by land.

Is undercutting on fares hurting?
We have advance purchases where a limited number of seats are given at discounts to people certain about their travel plans. This is not unusual, other airlines do it too. We had a buy one-get-one-free campaign on our Delhi flight and it was so popular, we extended it till the end of February.

Is crew a problem?
We have our own French and Indonesian engineers and pilots. We took a Civil Aviation official to Holland to train him in flight safety inspections of Fokker 100s.
A decade of hope, violence and uncertainty
Yubarkh Ghimire in Samaya, 18-24 February

The Maoist insurgency is entering its 10th year. When they first started fighting corrupt politics, they hoped even though they resorted to violence. It is easy to sell revolutionary dreams however utopian in a society with our inequities. But where has this revolution got us? How safe do the people feel from the rebels? And how much of its political character does the movement still have left? It is imperative for the Maoists to examine these questions.

The Maoists were ultimately responsible for the royal step of February First. Whether by disregarding the political parties in the second round of the peace talks or by declaring that they would talk only to the king, the Maoists have steadily weakened the political parties and the multi-party government. Political trust in any party or association ends when its strategy and principles cease to be relevant and are contradictory. Having declared that they would talk only to the king, the Maoists will lose the trust of the people if they emerge as a political entity. The UN and human rights organisations have condemned the Maoists for abducting school children and recruiting child soldiers, so it’s unlikely that the UN can be a mediator as the Maoists want.

The international community is watching with keen interest. They disapprove of the growing distance between the king and the parties. They say they will continue with economic and military support for Nepal only if the political parties are granted freedom under constitutional monarchy. The parties must be allowed the environment to pursue their political activity in cooperation with the king. Though the international community by and large don’t agree with the February First declaration, it has not changed its stance on the insurgents. For the Maoists to assume that the international community would not last long, that such a step was necessary to create an environment for the multiparty system to thrive. Several leaders under house arrest and detention are being released. There are signs that the state is gradually loosening censorship on the media. After February First, some positive things have been taking place but this information doesn’t seem to be getting out to the outside world.

Layman: Democracy of which era? 1950, 1990 or now?

Rajendra Dhamala

The Maoists have stated that they will intensify their war against the state. But we have seen ordinary Nepalis suffer the most from armed conflict. This is the best opportunity for the Maoists to give up arms and work hand-in-hand with the Nepali people, political parties to build a democratic society. Any kind of revolution or political change is possible only when there is unity between the political and democratic forces. There is no doubt about this.

Home work
Kapiyana, 10 February

DOTT—Damburi Sakkis has been convicted for his studies that she will do anything to get her money to pay her school fees and buy textbooks. Damburi, 10, works as a porter so she can go to school 10 days in a month. Still, she manages to catch up with her class. “We have no land so the children help in running the house,” says her 45-year-old mother. Most dalit children in Latamandu, like Damburi, go to school only when they are able to work hard and work they do. They get less than Rs 50 a day for carrying 30-45 kg of resin. Most are malnourished and too exhausted to pay attention to their studies. Many cannot continue with their classes because the little they earn is spent on food. There are around 60-65 dalit families in this village and not one of them has passed SLC.

Political solutions
Sundarmani Dixit in Nepal Samacharpatra, 20 February

In his royal proclamation on February First, King Gyanendra expressed his commitment to the restoration of multiparty democracy and called for the Maoists to join mainstream politics peacefully. If we are to take the royal proclamation as the road map to complete democracy and get international cooperation, the following steps would be effective:

1. Political leaders, journalists, lawyers, student leaders and human rights activists who have been arrested need to be released immediately without preconditions. Their political and other activities should not be restricted. It will enable the Maoists to restore multiparty democracy if they are unable to work independently.

2. The government should restore most of the fundamental rights of the citizens. This will help achieve the goals of royal proclamation and ensure that foreign aid and diplomatic support remain intact. Bhramara was accused of defying the new rebel rules introduced on 12 February by Drisam Dahal, Maoist leader of Kathmandu VDC. Bhramara will have to dig bombes for the militants for two months. Rebel leader Dahal has also been forcing the villagers to join protest rallies and shout slogans against the government. Notices saying that only medical treatment and work is allowed were pasted all over the area. The Maoists have been told to stay away from the village and warned of severe punishment if they enter. But since the king took control, donor agencies have been unable to cut off aid to the Maoists. They have laid down conditions for the state to fulfill in order to receive continued support. Some of these steps have not been made up their minds without understanding the reality. The situation in the country is quite different from what donor agencies expect from the speculative reporting of the international media. Understandably democracy has not been able to set the record straight.

Several ambassadors have returned to their countries for consultations. Nepal’s main donors such as the US, UK, India and the EU have threatened to suspend military and other aid if the government fails to restore fundamental rights. Foreign Minister Ramshhari Dahal had summoned Kathmandu-based ambassadors to explain the royal proclamation and to seek international cooperation.

Finance Minister Madhukar Shamsher Rana in Rajdhani, 22 February

For an impoverished country like Nepal, foreign aid is important for health, education, infrastructure and poverty alleviation. Military aid to Nepal has saved a large chunk of the national budget from being spent on arms and ammunition. But since the king took control, donor agencies have been unable to pull out. They have laid down conditions for the state to fulfill in order to receive continued support. Some of these steps have not been made up their minds without understanding the reality. The situation in the country is quite different from what donor agencies expect from the speculative reporting of the international media. Understandably democracy has not been able to set the record straight.

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whole district is affected by the blockade. The security forces, meanwhile have been forcing transporters to operate services.

Posted back

Annapurna Post, 23 February

VDC secretaries of Baglung who had abandoned their posts are now returning to their duties on orders of the CDO. Two years ago, 88 out of 89 VDC offices were bombed and important documents destroyed. All VDC secretaries of Baglung Municipality who were forced to leave the office have now returned to their jobs.

VDC secretaries of Baglung have been given strict orders to work in the villages. They will be stripped of their allowances if found working from the district headquarters.

Unhealthy blockade

Rajdhani, 21 February

Medical supplies have not reached dozens of villages in the eastern part of the country due to the Maoist blockade. The regional medical store of Biratnagar reported large stocks of medicines donated by the German development bank, KfW rotting in stores. “We haven’t been able to transport the medicines anywhere,” said Dhirananda Jha, chief of the medical store at Biratnagar. The medicines are packed and ready for distribution to eight eastern hill districts and three districts in the mountains where essential drugs are in short supply. Only some districts in the tarai such as Jhapa, Morung, Sunsari, Saptari and Simha have received medical supplies. Every year, KfW has been helping with medical supplies worth nearly Rs 150,000 to primary health centres, health posts and sub-health posts of various districts in the tarai, hills and mountains.

Interview with Arjun Narsingh KC, NC spokesman

Deshantar, 20 February

How has the Nepali Congress reacted to the royal proclamation of February First?
Before you ask me questions, tell me if you can or can’t publish my answers. If you can, this is the opinion of the Nepali Congress: we do not agree with the royal step. You have announced a movement. Our movement will be a powerful, non-violent satyagraha. We have asked all those who want democracy to come to the streets and all democratic forces to unite and work for this movement.

Is the NC ready to cooperate with the Maoists?
Until they renounce violence and give up arms, we can’t work with them.

How are you trying to involve the NC-D?
We don’t just want a working solidarity, we want party unification. The Congress must work as one. All democratic forces need to join hands, put aside their differences. Only then can we solve the national crisis.

Will the people join you on the streets?
The Nepali people want democracy. If they don’t come to the streets today, they will come tomorrow. They will not compromise on their rights to constitutional monarchy and multipartite democracy.

“[...]”

Soldiers rescue a bus passenger wounded when Maoists opened fire on a passenger bus on the Prithivi Highway at Beni Ghat on Sunday. The man was later flown to the army hospital in Chhauni by helicopter.

KIRAN PANDAY

UTL Re-Registration Form for UTL’s WAVE Customers

1. UTL Tel. Number:__________________________
2. Name:
   i. Customer Name:__________________________
   ii. User Name:______________________________
3. Installation Address (House No. / Street Name / Ward No. / Area Name / VDC / City / District):
4. Nepal Telecom Contact Number (If Available):
5. Following Documents as applicable must be attached:
   a. If Phone is Registered in an Individual Name:
      i. Photocopy of Citizenship Certificate
   b. If Applicant is a Tenant, Letter of Consent from Landlord
   c. If Applicant is working with any Institution/Company, certificate for such affiliation is required
   d. If Phone is Registered in a Company Name:
      i. Photocopy of Company Registration Certificate
      ii. Photocopy of Company Income Tax/VAT Registration Certificate

I hereby declare that the information given above is true to the best of my knowledge.

Date:__________________________
Signature:__________________________

Thumb Impression in presence of UTL’s authorised person

Right

Left

Certification of House Owner

I hereby certify that ____________________________ residing at ____________________________, District ____________________________, VDC / Municipality, Ward No. ____________________________, Margalla IL _________________, is the tenant of my house located at ____________________________, District ____________________________, VDC / Municipality, Ward No. ____________________________, Margalla IL _________________, house No./Block No. _____________________________. I have no objection of use of United Telecom Limited’s Telephonic Service(s) in my house.

House Owner’s Name:__________________________
Address:__________________________
Contact No.:__________________________
Signature:__________________________
As Kathmandu’s concrete jungle spreads, some of its inhabitants are going back to their roots and using building materials that reflect their cultural heritage. Examples of this terra cotta renaissance can be seen in various aspects of life but none as visibly as in the bricks used to build houses.

Almost two decades ago, Tirtha Lal Maharjan decided to produce traditional dachhi-appas (literally: bricks beaten into size). It was a big gamble and in those days, it felt like Maharjan was decades ahead of his time. But Maharjan was patient and the market steadily picked up.

Dachhi-appas are an essential part of Nepal’s heritage and Maharjan has transformed them into a more ornamental style with carvings and figures that were found only on stone and wood. Initially, the market for these bricks was limited and Maharjan would have suffered major loss if it hadn’t been for Dwarika Das Shrestha, who bought all his unsold bricks to build the award-winning heritage hotel, Dwarika, in Battisputali.

Dwarika’s wife, Ambika Shrestha supported his move and gave Maharjan the exposure and reputation he needed to get more orders and run a viable business. Dachhi-appas are mostly used for decorative purposes and Maharjan has almost 400 different designs and styles to choose from. He also produces bricks according to client specifications and has special designers such as Namgyal Bahadur Maharjan and Rabi Bahadur Jonchhe.

Each brick has its specific use such as nagol or kasima for base and the jashi for the middle. The jashi uses the nag belt or flower patterns, which also strengthens the house against earthquakes. The borders of doors and windows have layers of animals, birds or eyebrow patterns.

Using these bricks as ornaments means understanding the style of the house. As architect Sarosh Pradhan says, “It is important to feel the spirit of the place and know the purpose of the building, then balance it with the right aesthetics.”

These designs are more than just decorative. According to Nepali mythology, when a house is completed, a special puja with tantric rituals are held to give the inanimate designs a spirit. It is believed that in times of need, these animals will come to life and protect the house and its inhabitants.

The son of a farmer, Tirtha
Lal Maharjan made bricks in a factory. His family faced many hardships before his mentor Ramesh J Thapa helped him get a job at the national metal crafts museum in Lalitpur. Here he became a mukhiya and realised the potential need for traditional ornamental bricks. He noticed that foreign guests who visited heritage sites inspected old architecture.

Renovation works were being done in a haphazard manner without proper material. Maharjan came to the conclusion that opening a traditional brick factory would not only be a commercial enterprise, it would also help protect Nepali culture and heritage.

Dachhi-appas was one way of doing this and an architect Pradhan says, “With the advancement of new materials, technology and environmental concerns, we must explore new solutions in architecture and design.” Maharjan has opened the first brick showroom in Nepal at Baneswor. He has launched a trend among urban dwellers of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan making traditional glamorous. This means when an old house is torn down these days, it is not replaced by a soulless concrete and glass box but a modern building with a traditional brick façade that is in harmony with its surroundings.

Luckily, Kathmandu is full of copycats and this return to traditional architecture is spreading along the Valley’s gallis and bahals.

Jashi border used at Kantipur Temple House.
B eing alive, we tend to think that biology is easy to grasp. In the accepted classification of sciences, mathematics is thought to be the queen and the most difficult to grasp, followed by physics, chemistry and finally, biology. But this scientific hierarchy is false: we now know that biology contains more mathematics than imagined.

When molecules entered the scientific understanding of life with the discovery of DNA, biology climbed one step up the scale to chemistry. Then, with recognition of the abstract schemes dictating how genes are expressed, biology climbed even closer to mathematics. Today’s buzzword in the study of life is 'systems' biology. For a long time, those who studied the nature of life and heredity were divided into two camps: epigeneticists, who emphasised environmental influences on living organisms and preformists, who stressed the similarities between parents and progeny. The epigeneticist view was clearly wrong, because something stable had to be transmitted across generations. But the preformist view that the entity transmitted across generations was the whole organism was contradicted by the impossibility of segmenting objects infinitely. What had to be transmitted was not the final organism but the recipe to make it. Consider the old metaphysical puzzle: is a wooden boat whose planks are gradually replaced as they decay the same boat after all the planks have been changed? 'Systems' biology is biology that recognises that what remains the same is the design of the boat—that which determines the relationships between the planks.

Operation could be performed by a simple machine, which he called the Universal Turing Machine, reading and modifying a linear sequence of symbols. This required only the physical separation of the symbols (visualised as a tape) handled by the machine and the machine itself.

Genetic engineering rests on the manipulation of DNA molecules in order to reprogram foreign cells. As a result, many bacteria today produce human proteins. But this represents only a small part of the genetic program. Transfer of genes between organisms is widespread. Nuclear cloning, illustrated by the sheep Dolly, has made the Universal Turing Machine a highly revealing, if not all explaining, model of the cell.

The outcome of some computer programs is at once entirely deterministic, innovative and unpredictable. Life is inherently creative. However, the metaphor is limited by a simple fact: computers do not make computers. The challenge for the new biology is to understand how they would.
When King Gyanendra suspended Nepal’s democracy, he incurred the wrath of the United Nations, India and several other countries. But most democracies, from the NEPAL IN THE FOREIGN PRESS
Rohan Gunaratna
Philippines to Colombia, have failed to quell domestic rebellions democratically. With much of Nepal now controlled or dominated by Maoists insurgents, strong and centralised leadership is a stark necessity, although King Gyanendra will need to somehow forge a national consensus to contain and ultimately end the insurgency.

While the situation appears grim, there is still hope. First, there is no foreign country backing the insurgents. New Delhi, for example, is worried that the insurgency will embolden Indian revolutionaries in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Andhara Pradesh. Similarly, whenever the insurgents in Nepal are referred to as Maoists, Beijing is offended.

Second, the international community is willing to help. Because of human rights violations by Nepal, US and Europe were reluctant to provide assistance. The Maoists are on Washington’s list of designated terrorist groups and both the US and European governments are giving assistance in the form of military training and weaponry, which I expect will continue.

Maoists worldwide, including those of Nepal, believe that nothing can be changed without the use of guns. Past peace talks have been failures: on each occasion, the insurgents have infiltrated government-controlled areas and established their presence there even as they were negotiating. The government should remain open to dialogue but incessantly carry out counterinsurgency operations till the enemy is substantially degraded. Here are key measures needed to overcome the Maoist threat:

- The government must decapitate the rebel leadership, a task that will require investment in high-quality intelligence with attractive rewards for information leading to the arrest or death of insurgents and detection of camps, safe houses and weaponry. The police and army should also be rewarded with bonuses and promotions for hunting down the Maoists.

- The military should recruit members of families that have suffered from the insurgency.

- The king must offer an amnesty to insurgents who renounce the rebellion.

- The security forces must move aggressively to regain control over towns and villages near Kathmandu, a key step towards reclaiming control of the country.

- Most crucial, the government must promise its suffering people what the insurgents are unwilling or unable to offer: jobs and security. Good governance, with an emphasis on efficiency and combating corruption, is required to secure public support and neutralise the Maoists’ appeal. If the king can unite his country in the fight against the insurgency, it is not too late for Nepal yet.

Rohan Gunaratna is head of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies in Singapore. This piece first appeared in Time magazine.

Southasia, in Dhaka, New Delhi and Islamabad. But Kathmandu stands out because Nepal remains a one-city country. The Valley has the power and it will take the first bite out of the public exchequer and donor largesse. There was a hope that the rampant and unplanned urban expansion would at least be controlled naturally by a lack of water supply. But trust Kathmandu’s planners and politicians to propose a $120 million project to bring the most expensive water ever to feed the Valley’s future thirst and expansion.

And now, when the rest of the country is sucked in and brutalised by Maoist insurgents, the Valley’s comfortable classes have the time and resources to decimate poor areas and degrade. Here are key measures needed to overcome the Maoist threat:

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**An aloof Valley**

**Capital egocentricism is seen around the region, but Kathmandu takes the cake**

Kathmandu Valley, by now largely urbanised, lives in detachment from the rest of the country. Since the royal takeover of February First, the countryside has seen blockades by the Maoists but the capital pretend hard not to notice.

Whole regions have been locked up, transportation is a memory, supplies have dried up, industries are closed, vegetables and milk can’t make it to market. People walk like in the old days, in some places trek 100 km from the Indian border to reach Kathmandu Valley’s supermarkets and cafes. Elsewhere, people are hunkered down without news. Either the press and FM radio stations are shuttered or the transportation is not there to bring the papers.

But the word so far in Kathmandu Valley and this proved unacceptable to the Maoists insurgents, strong and centralised leadership is a stark necessity, although King Gyanendra will need to somehow forge a national consensus to contain and ultimately end the insurgency.

While the situation appears grim, there is still hope. First, there is no foreign country backing the insurgents. New Delhi, for example, is worried that the insurgency will embolden Indian revolutionaries in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Andhara Pradesh. Similarly, whenever the insurgents in Nepal are referred to as Maoists, Beijing is offended.

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As Rotarians around the world celebrate 100 years this week, Nepali clubs push for their own district

AARTI BASNYAT

It has always felt like a cross between a high-school Student Council and a Boy Scouts for adults. With its pokey-green ‘Service over Self’ motto and gear-wheel logo, the Rotary Club has been described as a worldwide club of Reader’s Digest subscribers. But ever since it was established on 23 February 1905 in Chicago by the young idealistic lawyer, Paul P Harris, Rotary Clubs have spread across the world with a message of friendship, understanding and cooperation. The network is operated along the same principles as a multinational franchise: a local Rotary Club is registered as a non-profit, activities planned and members swear adherence to four principles of business ethics.

If it was set up today, Rotary Clubs would be called a chain franchise: a local Rotary Club is under the same profession and attendance is required in meetings. The dedication of Rotarians is applied through its ‘Four-way Test’: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

In Nepal, the first Rotary Club was established in 1959 under Rotary’s Calcutta District, which is the oldest club in mainland Asia. Back then, it was considered a club for rich old men and therefore inaccessible. Only since 1986 has there been a rush of new members from the corporate social circles. Now, Rotary has grown to 66 clubs in Nepal with 34 of them still under Calcutta and there are now a move for the Nepali clubs to declare independence from India and have their own district. Rotarian Rajesh Thapa of Mt Everest Rotary Club tells us: “We are very close to becoming a district of our own. Hopefully, by next Rotary year we will be an autonomous unit.”

Once Nepal has established its own district, Nepali Rotarians can work towards giving more to society by working under one district governor to approve activities. It will be in direct contact with Rotary International and be able to apply for grants and funds directly instead of sharing funds allocated to the Rotarians in India. This will provide Nepali Rotarians with more leadership opportunities.

Rotary comes a full circle

Rotarians celebrate their centenary with a rally from Patan Darbar Square to Kathmandu Durbar Square on Wednesday.

The Rotary spirit is spreading in Nepal but being a club is not easy. Diwakar Rajkarnikar of Bagnati Rotary Club says, “Rotary International demands complete transparency of funds and the working of member clubs. This requires an immense amount of paperwork from each club, which is one of our biggest weaknesses. We are constantly behind on paperwork. We won’t be given any grants till the paperwork is cleared.”

There is still a shortage of women members, Bagnati Rotary Club has the highest number of women members with only eight. Is Rotary still a rich man’s club, them? “Yes and no,” says Rajkarnikar. “Not everyone can afford the Rs 10,000 membership fee and other financial obligations. The fact that membership is only through invitation makes it even more exclusive. But it is open to everyone who wants to help society.”

Thapa, too, thinks Rotary has overcome its elite image: “After all, Rs 5,000 for six months isn’t that much and people spend so much more on temples and other things. This is all for a humanitarian cause.”

This week, Rotary clubs marked their centenary with a rally from Patan Durbar Square to Kathmandu Durbar Square, a meeting at the Rotary hall, in Thapathali and a celebration lunch at Satdobato Club with music and food for Rotarians.

There is no formula for success, but there are methods

Perspectives is a forum for thought. It offers a fresh take on issues that matter most to the corporate world.

It’s not a corny corporate hotline plan that ‘inspirational’ types would enjoy. Most will however, admit to being spontaneous, inspiration from what they read. With leading writers, professionals, gurus and journalists contributing, Perspectives offers a fresh take on issues that matter most to the corporate world.
FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- Ceremony and Stillness (Photographs by Frances Klazing at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Bobby Mahal Restaurant, Until 5 March, 4413722)
- Re-Collection Paintings by Sarita Dongol at Buddha Gallery, Thamel, Till 4 March, 4441689
- Odds and Ends Echinos by Beverley Thompson at Park Gallery, Lajimpat, Until 4 March, 4419503
- Built to Last Ceramics by Lila Niroula, 25th February, 4419503
- Sama Theatre Festival (Ceremony and Stillness, 25 February - 3 March 2005)

EVENTS

- Slide Presentation by Roya Hazarika at Park Gallery Café, 6PM, 25 February, 4419503
- Rugby Training at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- Art workshops at Park Gallery, Lajimpat. Every Saturday for both experienced and beginners. Contact Gopal Ghimire at 4349893, cgimikm@gmail.com
- Kathmandu Chorale Rehearsals at Thupa, 6.30 PM, 25 February. Tickets Rs 200, 4479488
- Kathmandu Flower Show 2005 at Chirang**, 31 March, 4419503
- Art workshop by Pooja Gurung and The Cloud Walkers every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox Bar. 4491234
- Artworks by Beverley Thompson and Anupma at Baba Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. Until 5 March. 4411122
- Paintings by Sarita Dongol at Buddha Gallery, Thamel, till 18 March. Proceeds go to the Chairo Gumba Restoration Fund. 4411706, gumba@aol.com
- Artworks by Britain’s best artists at 53 Park Village Hotel, 4349893, www.wcn.org.np
- Walkathon Postponed
- Walkathon Postponed

MUSIC

- Indian BBQ Night with Althaya and the Steam Injins at Dwarika’s Hotel on 25 February. Tickets Rs 799, 4479488
- Live Music at Juneli Bar, Hotel de l’Annapurna, Daraganj Marg, 4217111
- Good Time Blues Band at Rum Doodle every Friday, 7PM onwards. 4702826, 4702817, rum_doodle@gohimalaya.com
- Classical music, 7PM onwards, every Friday at Hotel Vajra. 4271545
- Jatra Saturday nights with Looza, 6.30 PM onwards. 4256622
- Jukebox experience with Posha Gurung and The Cloud Walkers every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox Bar. 4419503
- Jazz at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat on Wednesday and Saturday. 7.45 PM.

FOOD

- Arniko Special Lunch at Dwarika’s Hotel. 4479488
- Krishnagar Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika’s Hotel. 4479488
- Barbecue Dinner Every Friday at the Summit Hotel. 4704107
- Thai Food at Rox, Hyatt on Fridays and Saturdays. 12.30 AM-3PM. 4491234
- Seasons Special Lunch at Hotel Shanku in Sarangkot. 431, 4419599
- Delicious Pizzas and snacks at Park Village Hotel. 5372575
- Sizzling Weekend Treat at Sixteen Crowns Plaza. 4271999
- Genuine Thai cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bakhundole. 5521201
- Farm House Cafes Delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- Cafe Bahal Nepal and continental cuisine under the giant Cinnamon tree at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4709362
- Vegetarian Creations at Bim’s Restaurant. 4481026
- The Beer Garden at Vaishnavi, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- Dwarika’s Thai Lunch at the Heritage courtyard. 4479488
- The Tharu Kitchen at Jungle Base Camp. Junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge Celebrate spring. 4361500
- Shirshu Peaks Cottage on the edge of the Shivapuri National Park, don’t miss the best time to be in Shirshu. shirshu@aol.com
- Chico Chico Havana Package for Rs 1,700 at Club Himalaya. 4417106
- Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Barda, special package and prices. wcn-sarangkot@yahoocom
- Malaysia Dream Holidays Packages starting from Rs 41,550 per person. 2472425-93, 013-14, malaysia@holidays_marco@polosi.com.np
- Gateway package Night’s stay at Godavari Village Resort, includes dinner and breakfast. 5560675
- AAA Organic Farm and Guesthouses Rs 950 with three meals. 6631734
- Temples Tiger One night package Rs 250. 4263480
- Machan Wildlife Jungle Resort special packages available. 4225001
- Weekend Special at Park Village Resort, Bakhundole. 4702858
- Jomsom Mountain Resort Two nights-three days at Rs 5,999 for Nepalis, $199 for expatriates including safari and food. 4481110, sales@jomsom.com.np

CITY

- Walkathon Postponed

We wish to inform that the walkathon scheduled to be organised on Feb 17, 2005 has been postponed for an indefinite period. We wish to thank all those friends, supporters and well-wishers for their goodwill gestures.

Radio Sagarmatha/Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) Family
Ever since Boris Lissanevitch settled down in Kathmandu in the 1950s, there has been a long tradition of expatriates who have made Nepal their home to launch restaurants. Takeshi Okewara is just the latest. The only difference is that Takeshi doesn’t consider himself an expat, he is a Nepali through and through. His parents came here over 30 years ago and decided to stay. Takeshi was born in Nepal and considers this his homeland. He went off to the University of Vermont in the United States and graduated in architecture but there was something pulling him back to Kathmandu.

When he started working as an architect, he realised that it wasn’t quite what he wanted to do. “I realised that being an architect I would be hobnobbing with the rich, I wanted to do something that would bring me in contact with the ordinary people,” says Takeshi in remarkably colloquial Nepali.

Ever since Aka Restaurant opened up at the Sanchaya Kosh Building in Pulchok last year, it was been an immediate hit. The prices are just right, it is spacious and clean, the atmosphere is casual and relaxed. (“We should know, we all eat there.) Office workers from the nearby UN building, NGO-wallahs, diplomats and journalists all hang out at Aka like us.

This is one restaurant that you could say doesn’t have class and it wouldn’t be an insult. “I want to turn this into a classless public place where everyone is welcome,” says 32-year-old Takeshi. The experience gained working in Japanese and Italian restaurants in the United States has stood him in good stead. Aka is not a Japanese restaurant, Takeshi hastens to point out, it is global cuisine with American-style sandwiches, Nepali momos and Japanese full courses. Takeshi makes a modest income from the restaurant that allows him to live frugally in a country he has come to regard as home. “I feel very comfortable in Nepal, it is quite similar to Japan because it’s easy to make friends,” he explains.

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