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WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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Who is responsible when loans go bad?

Police investigations and arrests over lending and loan recovery are raising a fundamental question about who should police the banking system: the central bank or law enforcement agencies.

YAGYA BANJADE & SUDIL POKHAREL
KATHMANDU, AUG 13

In September 2019, the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) of Nepal Police arrested 11 employees of the then Bank of Kathmandu, now merged with Global IME Bank Limited, including its then chief executive officer, accusing them of extending a loan secured by riverbed land as collateral. The case was decided three years ago. Borrower Surendra Shrestha was convicted, while the bank's CEO and ten other employees were acquitted. The case is now before the Supreme Court.

In another case, the CIB investigated and filed a banking offence case in December 2025 against former Prabhu Bank chair Devi Prakash Bhattchan, former CEO Ashok Sherchan and other employees over transactions between Prabhu Bank and Prabhu Money Transfer, a remittance company. Nepal Rastra Bank, the country's central bank and banking regulator, had conducted a "special inspection" of Prabhu Bank just three months before the arrest.

The central bank had not identified an offence in the transactions in question, while the subsequent police investigation found serious irregularities and led to criminal charges.

A similar question has arisen over a loan extended by Nepal Investment Mega Bank to the now defunct Smart Telecom.

On January 14, 2020, Smart Telecom signed a loan agreement with the bank's Kalimati branch to finance letters of credit for the import of telecommunications infrastructure. The total loan facility amounted to Rs5.82 billion and included overdraft, term loan, letter of credit, bills-bank guarantee and short-term loan.



The fronts of the Nepal Police bureau and the Nepal Rastra Bank headquarters in Kathmandu.

Smart Telecom secured the loans against its machinery and equipment.

After ownership of the pledged machinery and equipment passed to the government, the bank initiated a collateral auction to recover its outstanding dues.

The transfer followed the revocation of Smart Telecom's licence after it failed to pay its dues to the government and renew the licence in 2023.

The CIB has now investigated the transaction and filed a case. Nepal Rastra Bank, however, has not publicly commented on the matter.

Former finance minister and former governor Yubaraj Khatriwada said Nepal Rastra Bank should be the first to examine such matters because it is the regulator of the financial sector.

"Every regulator has its own role in overseeing lending," he said.

"In the financial system, that

responsibility lies with Nepal Rastra Bank," he said.

These are not isolated cases. Police have stepped up investigations into loans extended by banks, even as the central bank says its regular supervision and regulatory inspections have not found the same irregularities. As a result, some bankers have been arrested while others are facing criminal cases.

The central bank's silence has raised questions about its supervisory role. While bank CEOs and employees have faced arrest and prosecution, there has been no similar scrutiny of the officials responsible for overseeing those institutions.

The Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 2017 (BAFIA), requires banks to recover principal and interest by selling collateral when a borrower defaults or fails to pay

interest or penalties. Banks have relied on this provision to justify auctioning collateral—the CIB, however, has questioned the process by which some of those assets were sold.

At a meeting with Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle last week, the CEOs of 20 commercial banks raised concerns that bankers could face arrest simply for decisions made in the course of lending.

Santosh Koirala, president of the Nepal Bankers' Association, said bankers were increasingly fearful about being arrested despite following legal procedures and completing all required documentation when extending credit.

Growing scrutiny could deter bankers from taking decisions needed to keep credit flowing.

"There is a great deal of fear that we could be arrested simply for extending loans or making investments. The government needs to assure us that we can lend confidently and that it will stand by us if problems arise," Koirala told the finance minister.

The auction of Smart Telecom's assets by Nepal Investment Mega Bank is the latest case to heighten that fear, Koirala said.

"Investors were already worried that their investments could go bad because of the economic slowdown. Now bankers are worried that they could face government investigations or arrest simply for having extended those loans," he said.

>> Continued on page 2

10 dead, 3 missing as landslide sweeps entire settlement in Rolpa

The disaster struck one of the remotest parts of Uwa, making rescue operation extremely challenging.



A defaced slope pictured on Thursday after a landslide struck Kotalbara in Thabang, Rolpa.

KASHIRAM DANGI
ROLPA, AUG 13

Ten people died and three have been missing in a landslide triggered by heavy rainfall at Kotalbara of ward 5 in Rolpa's Thabang Rural Municipality, officials say.

Chief District Officer Ganga Bahadur Chhetri confirmed the casualties.

The victims have been identified as 18-year-old Shanti Pun Magar, 60-year-old Kamal Bahadur Pun Magar, 80-year-old Manrakhi Pun Magar, 75-year-old Dal Bahadur Pun Magar and 85-year-old Hastakala Roka Magar.

Five more bodies were recovered from different locations along the Lungri river in Rolpa and the Madi river in neighbouring Pyuthan.

Three of the victims have been

identified, Chhetri said.

The heavy rainfall on Wednesday evening caused the disaster in a small settlement called Uwa. In the downpour lasting nearly an hour and a half, residents had scrambled to bring their children and livestock indoors.

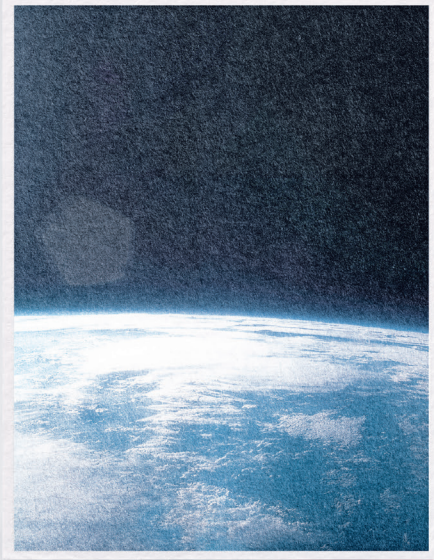
At around 7:30pm, when the rain had just begun to subside, a torrent of mud and debris came crashing down. The landslide struck with such force and speed that residents had little chance to escape.

When 11 houses, both old and newly built, were swept away, the 13 residents were buried.

Dhukmann Roka Magar, a community leader from a neighbouring village, said the landslide came right over the houses and buried them.

>> Continued on page 3

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OPINION



Deliver inclusion

Previous governments excluded marginalised communities from vital roles. The new one must not.

When the Rastriya Swatantra Party came to power in March with a near two-thirds majority, Nepal, for the first time, saw roughly 35 percent women in the House of Representatives. Following this, Prime Minister Balendra Shah appointed six women ministers to his 17-member Cabinet. Even as ministers from the Khas-Arya dominate the ministry leadership, those from the Madheshi, Janajati and Dalit communities are also represented. For a country that has long struggled to place women and marginalised communities in top leadership positions, the government’s move was historic and commendable. It also instilled hope that it would prioritise inclusivity in all vital appointments.

But beyond the Cabinet, the government’s appointments to constitutional bodies, commissions, universities and cultural institutions are far from inclusive. Between March 27 and August 11, the Cabinet made more than 50 appointments, of which only four were women. Madheshis, Janajatis and Dalits were thinly represented; Muslims were entirely excluded. Similarly, there isn’t a single woman among the three appointments to the Election Commission; nor are there any people from the Madheshi community. This is a continuation of the disregard of inclusion by previous governments. Even in senior university appointments, the notion of inclusion has been flouted: The government recently appointed seven university vice-chancellors, but not a single woman made the list. Appointments to state-run cultural academies failed to reflect the country’s regional gap and ethnic diversity.

The government justifies the appointments as being based on merit and open competition. It is true that Nepal’s public institutions are in dire need of competent people and should be free from political patronage, but the Balendra Shah government must internalise the idea that excluding people from marginalised communities from vital positions entails exclusion of an array of diverse views, inviting criticisms that the state still views them as ‘incompetent’. These institutions cannot be run by a cluster of historically privileged groups, with a similar worldview.

The Constitution recognises inclusion as the fundamental principle of the state. Hence, it is also vital to ask: What does merit mean in a country where access to education, job opportunities and institutions has often sidelined women, Janajatis, Madheshis and Dalits? Centuries-old social hierarchies, such as the caste system, regional disparities and gender discrimination, have resulted in structural inequality in Nepal. Underrepresented groups cannot remain marginalised because they lack sufficient representatives to work for their upliftment and representation. Nepal cannot afford to push them back further.

The current Cabinet is considered the youngest and most academically qualified in the country’s history. They have repeatedly promised not to repeat the political practices of old parties. Being transparent about recent appointments would be a good start, but that is not enough. What’s more vital is for them to understand that they should prioritise inclusion in key appointments not only to correct historical exclusion faced by marginalised communities and people from remote regions but also to ensure that those positions aren’t reserved for the privileged few. If they don’t correct their course, they will lose the confidence of the marginalised communities who also voted them into power.

THEIR VIEW

Denied a future

Resolutions, reports and expressions of ‘deep concern’ cannot educate a child.

Five years after the Taliban returned to Kabul, the world is still issuing statements while a generation of Afghan girls is being erased from classrooms and public life. UNESCO now says 2.4 million girls have been denied secondary education, 200,000 more than last year. The number could rise to 4 million by 2030. Afghanistan remains the only country where girls and women are barred from secondary and higher education. The cruelty extends to universities, many jobs, parks, gyms and public life. It is a systematic attempt to make half a population invisible. Yet the response from the UN, powerful capitals and institutions built to defend human rights has become a ritual of condemnation without consequence. Resolutions, reports and expressions of ‘deep concern’ cannot educate a child. If these bodies possess moral authority, this is where it must be exercised.

The West, above all the US, cannot pretend Afghanistan is somebody else’s problem. Washington led a war there for 20 years, spent blood and treasure ‘remaking’ the Afghan state, and repeatedly invoked the rights of Afghan women as evidence of progress before exiting in August 2021 as that state collapsed and the Taliban swept back into power. Whatever the arguments for ending an endless war, departure did not erase responsibility for those left behind. Nor should the passage of time normalise Taliban repression. The US, EU, UN Security Council, Muslim-majority states and Afghanistan’s neighbours should coordinate pressure. They must deny diplomatic legitimacy, preserve targeted sanctions, condition concessions on measurable restoration of women’s rights, expand scholarships and remote-learning pathways, fund Afghan women-led organisations and protect humanitarian aid from political bargaining. Countries with influence over the Taliban must actually use it. Afghan girls were encouraged for two decades to believe that classrooms, careers and public life belonged to them. The world cannot now watch those doors being bolted shut and call its helplessness diplomacy.

— Dawn (Pakistan)/ANN

Dreaming big, ruling blind

The central idea of democracy is not to eliminate politics through expertise but to place expertise within political realms.

BIKASH BHATT CHHETRI



For quite a long time, Nepalis had no option but to vote in conformity with their old political fan clubs, merely serving their own interests rather than the greater good. They never fostered bigger dreams. After long-serving, tested politicians failed to perform better, ‘change’ became a buzzword throughout the nation. Fueled by public anger and frustration, some urban and suburban Nepalis formed an ideologically unanchored party in 2022 and called it Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), which translates to National Independent Party—practically implying freedom from any old political doctrines.

The new party mesmerised the public with hype and charm, deploying a set of fresh faces in national media after a long time. The RSP brand quickly became the talk of the town, especially in the middle-class segments of rural and urban Nepal.

As a reaction to aggressive gerontocracy in almost all institutional domains and particularly to the social media ban imposed by the UML government, Nepal witnessed a Gen Z revolt on September 8-9, 2025. The uprising resulted in the bloodshed of 76 Nepalis all over the country, with an estimated Rs85 billion worth of loss.

The aftermath of the Gen Z movement further exacerbated the need for urgent change in mainstream politics, threatening the shares of political power of the old parties—the Nepali Congress, the UML and the Maoists (now NCP). This led to a call for a snap election in the country, putting the RSP brand in an advantageous position.

The RSP alone was unable to encash this situation as they were not fully able to imbibe the spirit of the Gen Z movement owing to their fragile ideological and methodological standing. So, a significant space was provided to the urban elites who somehow managed to show their faces and create viral, decent political reels during the movement.

Enter the viral part-time rapper, full-time Mayor of Nepal’s biggest metropolis Balendra Shah in the RSP show.

Shah, hailing from the Madheshi community and with approximately 58



AI GENERATED

percent of the total national votes coming from Madhesh province, was a sound marketing strategy for RSP’s PM candidacy. His candidacy also stood for political revenge against prevailing gerontocracy dominance. The new ‘Balen’ flagship featured in the RSP brand sent ripples in the public sphere. The party eventually won 182 of 275 HoR seats—a landslide victory. Yet the possibility of a new sound turning into a melody now seems probable.

Irrespective of government changes, for the Nepali middle-class, the question of accessible quality education, health, food and energy has always been the wolf at the door. As RSP is an embodiment of middle-class thought, it is shackled to fulfil the very economic and political aspirations of its major voters. Ironically, the party is not ready to listen to the rising middle-class cries—rising commuting charges, burgeoning rent, fuel and energy prices, and midnight hustle for cooking gases, just to name a few. And, mind you, blaming external shocks for these signals of economic havoc would betray the middle class twice, inviting mistrust in the party.

The mistrust loop it invites seems complex. Investors are unable to regain

their confidence, whereas consumers now fear spending. Eighteenth-century moral philosopher Adam Smith, says it is the ‘invisible hand’ that corrects the market. However, even the invisible hand seems to fail in Nepal’s economic landscape. Meanwhile, sitting RSP ministers suspect each move of the political actors, whether inside or outside the party. Such developments have not only confused the RSP’s core members but have also left its voters bewildered, unsure of what to make of the unfolding political fiasco.

The RSP’s 100-day plan, touted as the blueprint for immediate reform and cherished by the public initially, remains uncelebrated for failing to answer some important ‘wh’s: who benefits, who was intently excluded, and, importantly, who gets to decide? Technocracy, though not purely antithetical to democracy, creates hurdles when expertise starts substituting political deliberation. RSP’s technocratic illusion is becoming counterproductive to its integrity, with its technical correctness presented as political neutrality, leaving the agendas of distribution, priorities, recognition, and social justice aloof.

The gap between the RSP’s promise

Unbalanced student-faculty ratio

Higher education institutions in Nepal are short of qualified faculty in the right places who deliver the right content.

ROSHEE LAMICHHANE

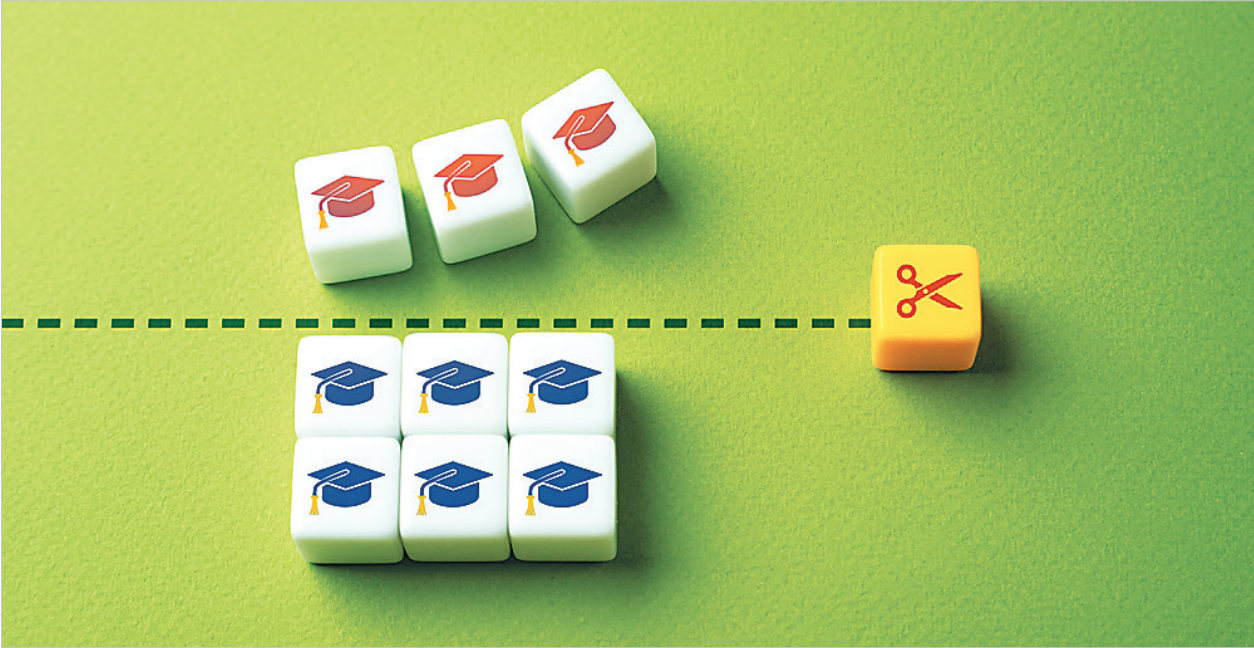


It is difficult being an educator at a time when you continue to face complaints from employers that graduates are not job-ready. At the recently held panel discussion and workshop, this issue was once again raised. This is something I usually hear in conversations with employers as well as academics within and even outside my institution. I notice that it is rarely addressed as purely a matter of curriculum deficiency. It has increasingly become more of a human resource issue. Universities and higher education institutions in Nepal are short of qualified faculty in the right places who deliver the right content.

According to the University Grants Commission’s EMIS figures for 2023/24, 12,082 full-time teachers work in the constituent campuses. However, the community and private affiliated campuses, which enrol approximately 62 percent of the total 633,053 students enrolled in higher education institutions in Nepal, are not required to submit any full-time faculty register data. As a result, the actual picture of full-time faculty members cannot be easily estimated and is likely to be a fraction of what enrolment numbers would demand.

The disparity becomes distinct when one juxtaposes the trend lines of two different measures. From 2016/17 to 2023/24, overall higher education enrollment in Nepal increased by around 71 percent, growing from 371,000 to 633,000 students. In the same period, the teaching staff across the constituent campuses increased by less than 30 percent, from 9,299 to 12,082 faculty members. Students are now joining the educational system almost twice as fast as their instructors join to educate them.

The disparities between the universities are just as illustrative. Tribhuvan University, which accounts for more than 75 percent of the country’s higher education student body, reports a student-teacher ratio of around 21:1 within its constituent campuses. The ratio for Kathmandu University is about 25:1, for Far-Western University 47:1, and for Nepal Open University, whose distance learning model explains the huge numbers, the ratio is a rather striking 102:1. This suggests that teaching capacity is unevenly distributed by institution as well as by discipline.



SHUTTERSTOCK

The amount of public funding has also increased from Rs9.3 billion in 2017/18 to Rs17.5 billion in 2023/24, although most of this additional funding has been made in infrastructure and block grants rather than the recruitment of full-time faculty members, especially outside HEIs in Kathmandu.

When placed against international benchmarks, Nepal’s position appears to be dismal. The generally quoted planning range of the student-to-faculty ratio is 10:1 to 20:1 internationally. In the case of the United States, the average student-to-faculty ratio at degree-granting institutions was approximately 13:1 in the fall of 2022, 14:1 in public four-year colleges and 10:1 in private non-profit four-year colleges. The standards for AICTE of India for technical education regard the faculty-to-student ratio as 10:1 and 15:1 to be the minimum acceptable ratio for relevant technical courses due to the nature of laboratory-based courses.

According to UNESCO and the World Bank’s tertiary-level indicators, however, international comparisons of teacher-student ratio are clouded by varying definitions of ‘teacher’ and differential treatment of part-time teachers. Nevertheless, the Nepali practice of overreliance on visiting and part-time instructors, especially in private HEIs and those outside Kathmandu, indicates that the ratio is likely to worsen than at constituent campuses.

Nor does the shortage hit all disciplines in equal measure. At my own institution, we have earlier been compelled to employ foreign nationals to

teach courses on industrial economics and big data analysis purely due to a lack of local expertise. In other instances, there was a failure to deliver a course on marketing analytics owing to a lack of instructors. Students are increasingly favouring courses related to analytics and simulations, but the number of skilled instructors has failed to match their need. Some of this deficiency is reduced by faculty borrowing between departments and even institutions—again, an unsustainable practice. Such problems are even more pronounced outside the capital city, as most trained faculty have little incentive to relocate.

There is no consolidated figure that Nepal publishes for its expenditure on faculty development activities; however, even a liberal estimate that takes into account all funding for research, fellowships, conferences and course development is still a bare minimum compared to the minuscule higher education budget. There are very few opportunities for inter-university cooperation, sabbatical leaves and faculty exchanges across institutions. Online trainings and certifications, which are comparatively inexpensive and effective means of updating faculty members and keeping them abreast of international best practices, are hardly taken into consideration.

A standardised entry-level qualifying examination for faculty, as such, is unlikely to solve this issue. Given the role of AI in changing the skill set, a large number of skills tested in such an exam may quickly become obsolete in a

of transformation before the election and the governance experience now feels real. Everyday frustration is back to its norm, whether it be standing in long queues or paying extra rupees in bills. A layman is increasingly finding themself disillusioned with the RSP’s anti-establishment rhetoric, subtly reminding the regime of the persisting Nepali crisis of political faith. Such a situation not only adds to the public distrust, but a failure of populist promise may discredit RSP’s wanna-be Raghav Chadha or any ambitious ‘Ivy League *netas*’ and might spark a possibility of change which we Nepalis are tired of now.

The RSP, a politically neutral platform embracing significant influencers, is undoubtedly facing pressure to ‘look good’ in the eyes of Nepali society, be it inside or outside the country. This has been further illustrated by the duality of RSP parliamentarians on a plethora of regional and national issues. In democracies, questioning one’s own party is a healthy practice; it strengthens democratic values. However, the matter of integrity cannot be subjugated when it comes into the hands of the ruling party. In doing so, a ‘fit-in’ strategy might further escalate the doubt about conflicts of interest within the party and introduce another level of chaos.

Today, young Nepalis are unlearning faster than before. They desire more transparency, accountability, equity, inclusivity, ethical governance and fair participation. And the most beautiful thing is that we are learning how to start a dialogue to demand these desires in a much more responsible manner. The central idea of democracy is not to eliminate politics through expertise but to place expertise within political realms—subject to scrutiny, ideological and methodological orientation, accountability and public judgment. So, just in the name of ‘governance’, the impending issues on federalism, financial decentralisation, secularism, gender, inequality, informality, distribution, caste and social justice cannot be subdued. Though the RSP’s dream has seemingly become untrendy, these impending issues don’t easily erase themselves from public consciousness—the party has no excuses to ignore the *writings on the walls*.

Chhetri is an independent researcher & visiting faculty member of Economics at Tribhuvan University.

Lamichhane is the associate dean of Kathmandu University School of Management.

Can meditation help people living with dementia?

While meditation cannot cure or reverse dementia, research suggests it may help manage anxiety, stress, and emotional well-being for people with dementia and their caregivers.

○ **BADRI PRAKASH OJHA**

Last Spring, I was in Sydney, Australia, working on my research project and carrying my dream of permanently residing in the country. After decades of professional research and engagement, I was preparing for my new life abroad.

One day, I received a message that suddenly changed my life. I learned that one of the most loving members of my family had been diagnosed with dementia.

As I began researching the disease, I found that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), dementia is the seventh leading cause of death globally. In 2021, around 57 million people worldwide were living with dementia. The WHO also reports that more than 10 million new cases are recorded each year. In 2019, dementia was linked to around 1.6 million deaths worldwide.

It was surprising to learn that around 60 percent of people living with dementia are in developing and least-developed countries, where healthcare facilities are often limited. The disease also places an enormous burden on individuals, families, and national economies.

According to the report, the global economic burden of dementia is around \$1.3 trillion a year, including direct medical expenses and care costs. Without greater investment in early diagnosis, prevention, timely treatment, caregiver support and public health services, the WHO estimates that the economic burden of dementia could rise to \$2.8 trillion by 2030.

This news was devastating for me, as it is for many families facing similar situations around the world. Dementia is not merely a disease that causes memory loss; it can also affect a person's emotions, communication skills, and personality, while placing a profound emotional and financial burden on the entire family.

The diagnosis brought fear, uncertainty, and many unanswered questions. At that point, my dream of settling in Australia became less important. My priority was to return to my homeland and ensure that my loved one received the care and treatment they needed.

I immediately returned to Nepal and began making inquiries about healthcare services. Like many others I encountered during my research, I wanted to understand the condition better and find the best possible treatment for my loved one.

The search for medical treatment

My first step was to consult a psychiatrist. After evaluating the condition of the patient, the psychiatrist prescribed two tablets to be consumed every evening for 21 days.

We carefully followed the medical advice. However, within the first week of treatment, my loved one developed severe anxiety. The emotional distress increased, and I became concerned about whether the medication was producing the desired effect.

After completing the prescribed courses, I decided to seek another opinion. A second psychiatrist reviewed the condition and added another medication for one month. The psychiatrist also suggested that, after completing the treatment, brain imaging focusing on the hippocampus should be conducted.

The hippocampus is one of the brain's most important structures for learning

and memory. Pioneering researchers Dr Heiko Braak and Dr Eva Braak, neuropathologists at the University of Ulm in Germany, found that changes associated with Alzheimer's disease often begin in specific brain regions involved in memory before spreading to other areas of the brain.

Unfortunately, after the additional medication, my loved one became physically weaker. Watching someone so precious lose strength was heartbreaking.

Concerned about this deterioration, I consulted another psychiatrist who was also the professor and mentor of the previous psychiatrists. After reviewing the complete medical history and treatment response, he adjusted the medical plan.

Gradually, the condition became more stable. Anxiety reduced, physical strength improved, and daily activities became easier.

This experience taught me an important lesson: dementia care requires patience, continuous observation, and individu-



alised treatment. Every person responds differently, and medical decisions should be carefully monitored.

Introducing meditation as complementary care

Although medical treatment helped stabilise the condition, I realised that dementia care involves much more than medication. Dementia affects emotional health, confidence, sleep, and personal connection with the surrounding world.

Having practiced meditation for three decades and trained as a mindfulness meditation teacher, I decided to introduce gentle meditation sessions into my loved one's daily routine.

The sessions were simple and adapted according to ability. They included mindful breathing, relaxation practices, loving-kindness meditation, and moments of peaceful awareness.

Initially, maintaining attention was difficult. However, with patience and regular practice, meditation gradually became a comforting part of daily life.

Over time, I observed encouraging changes. My loved one became calmer than before, anxiety reduced, sleep improved, and emotional stability increased. Meditation did not bring back the lost memories or cure dementia, but it appeared to create greater peace, comfort, and emotional balance. This personal experience encouraged me to explore the scientific evidence behind meditation and dementia care.

What science says about meditation and the brain

Modern neuroscience has increasingly examined how meditation influences the brain, emotions, and stress responses.

One of the most influential stud-

ies was conducted by Dr Madhav Goyal and colleagues at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in the USA. Their Systematic review and meta-analysis, published in JAMA Internal Medicine in 2014, analyzed clinical trials involving thousands of participants. The researchers found that mindfulness meditation programs were associated with improvements in anxiety, depression, and psychological stress.

Dr Goyal and his colleagues emphasized that meditation must not replace medical treatment but can serve as a valuable complementary approach for improving mental well-being.

For people living with dementia, emotional symptoms such as anxiety, agitation, depression, and sleep difficulties can significantly reduce the quality of life. Therefore, approaches that improve emotional regulation may have meaningful benefits.

Technical University of Munich, Germany, and Dr Michel I Ponsler of the University of Oregon, USA, examined the neuroscience of mindfulness meditation. Their reviews explained that mindfulness practices influence the brain networks involved in attention, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and stress management.

These findings are important because dementia involves changes in many of these same brain systems. However, researchers caution that meditation cannot reverse dementia related brain damage. Instead, it may help strengthen emotional resilience and improve quality of life.

Meditation, stress and dementia caregivers

Dementia affects not only the person diagnosed but also the caregivers. Family members often experience emotional exhaustion, stress, anxiety, and uncertainty.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), developed by Dr Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, USA, has become one of

Meditation, neuroplasticity and the brain health

One of the most fascinating discoveries in

the most widely studied mindfulness programmes in the world. His research demonstrated that mindfulness practices can help people manage stress, pain, and emotional challenges.

Researchers involving dementia caregivers have also shown encouraging results. Dr Kirk Warren Brown, Professor of Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University, USA, and his colleagues studied mindfulness-based approaches for caregivers of people with dementia. Their findings suggested improvements in stress management, emotional resilience, and psychological well-being.

A healthier caregiver can create a more supportive and compassionate environment for the person living with dementia.

Meditation is not a cure, but it can support healing

It is important to maintain scientific honesty. Meditation is not a cure for dementia. Current evidence does not show that meditation can stop Alzheimer's disease, restore damaged brain cells, or replace medical treatment. However, meditation is a safe, affordable, and non-invasive practice that may complement conventional care. When combined with appropriate medication, physical activity, cognitive stimulation, healthy nutrition, and meaningful social relationships, meditation may contribute to improved emotional health and quality of life.

Although medical treatment helped stabilise the condition, dementia care involves much more than medication.

The goal of dementia care should not only be to add years to life but also to add life to those years.

A journey that changed my purpose
My journey from Sydney back to Kathmandu transformed my understanding of life. I lost one dream, but I discovered another purpose: to serve the needy, like my loved one.

Caring for my dearest loved one taught me that healing is now always about eliminating disease. Sometimes healing means reducing fear, creating a moment of peace, preserving dignity, and offering unconditional presence. Every meditation session reminds me that love, compassion, and patience are powerful forms of care. Dementia may affect memory, but it cannot erase the human need for connection and affection.

The future of dementia care should embrace an integrated approach combining modern medicine with scientifically supported practices such as meditation, mindfulness, exercise, healthy lifestyle choices, and compassionate caregiving.

Sometimes the greatest healing does not come only from medicine; it rather comes from being fully present with someone we love.



Ojha is a meditation teacher with a PhD in communication. He can be reached at badrio@gmail.com

Sri Lankan artist couple bring 'Two Hearts One Canvas' to Kathmandu

The exhibit explores the meeting points of love, memory, imagination, and human connection.

○ POST REPORT

KATHMANDU

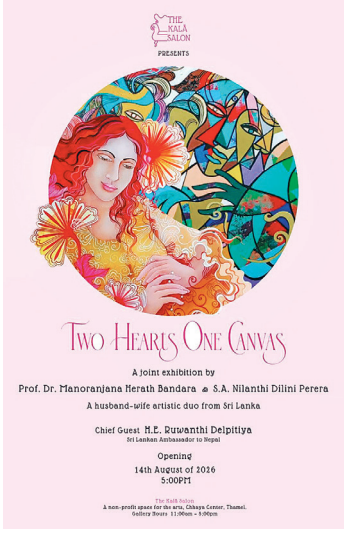
Sri Lankan artists Manoranjana Herath and Dilini Perera will present their joint exhibition, 'Two Hearts One Canvas', at The Kalā Salon, Chhaya Center, Thamel, from August 14 to September 7.

Curated by The Kalā Salon's founding director Sophia L Pandé, the exhibit brings together the work of the husband-and-wife artists through two thematic series, Herath's 'The Kiss' and Perera's 'Poetic Mind'.

Together, the works explore human emotions, love, memory, imagination, and the different ways people experience connection.

Herath's 'The Kiss' uses semi-abstract figurative forms to examine affection, intimacy and longing. His compositions feature entwined figures and expressive forms that reflect the emotional dynamics within relationships. Perera's 'Poetic Mind', meanwhile, moves towards memory, dreams and inner reflection, with feminine figures appearing alongside flowers, birds, fish and other imagery drawn from nature.

Although the artists maintain distinct visual approaches, the exhibition places their works in conversation with one another. Their use of colour, form, and symbolic imagery creates a shared visual language while retaining their individual perspectives. The title reflects both their relation-



ship as artists and partners and the meeting of emotion and imagination, reality and poetry, presence and memory within their practices.

Herath, a professor of sculpture at the University of the Visual and Performing Arts in Colombo, previously exhibited 'Untold Narratives' at The Kalā Salon in 2024. Perera, a Sri Lankan painter and art educator, has participated in exhibitions in Sri Lanka and abroad, including previous shows in Nepal.

Two Hearts One Canvas
When: August 14 to September 7
Where: The Kalā Salon, Chhaya Centre, Thamel, Kathmandu
Time: 11:00 am to 8:00 pm

'The End of Oak Street' finds wonder in suburban chaos

David Robert Mitchell takes the ingredients of a family drama and makes room for dinosaurs and absurdity.

○ JAKE COYLE

At the end of the block in David Robert Mitchell's 'The End of Oak Street,' is a cul-de-sac with a telephone pole in the middle and wires radiating out like the cables of a big top. It's a fitting touch for a break-neck, carnivalesque movie made with throwback showmanship.

Summer movies, of course, are not known for lacking in circus-like mayhem. But much of the pastiche delight of the 1980s-set 'The End of Oak Street,' a mid-August surprise, is how it absorbs an Amblin-style blockbuster spirit and conjures, without winking irony or belabored homage, a summer thrill ride seemingly designed for the drive-in.

Mitchell's breakthrough was the nifty 2014 horror 'It Follows,' which he followed up with an admirably ambitious but shaggily self-indulgent Los Angeles neo noir, 'Under the Silver Lake.' But any indulgences in 'The End of Oak Street,' about a 1980s suburban family whose neighborhood is transported through time, are for the audience. 'The End of Oak Street' is a bonkers blast.

It's best not knowing anything about the movie's twists, so tread carefully on the rest of this review. That's not to say that an enormous amount of 'The End of Oak Street' isn't immediately familiar, starting with the central family.

The Platts live in what looks like a San Fernando Valley neigh-



AP/RSS

borhood full of split levels and tidy little streets. Denise (Anne Hathaway) and Greg (Ewan McGregor) have two kids and a dog named Starbuck. Audrey (Maisy Stella) is a teenager and Brian (Christian Convery) is her younger brother.

But from the moment we meet them, during a neighborhood fair, there are obvious cracks in their all-American life. Greg is working a side job delivering pizzas while Denise is secretly typing up a maybe-aspirational novel about a woman dreaming of leaving her family. The kids have their own secrets, too. They suspect their parents are on the cusp of divorcing, and so, seemingly, do Greg and Denise.

Such a framework for sci-fi cata-

The dinosaurs are thrilling, but the film's strangest terrain is the family itself.

clysm is, naturally, Spielberg 101. But while 'The End of Oak Street' is sure to test and restore their familial bonds, Mitchell, who also wrote the script, takes a route that leans more into horror, absurdism and outright silliness.

In any case, yes, there are dinosaurs. It's both skillful and a lot of fun how Mitchell teases them out.

The first signs are mysterious. A flash of light. A strange exotic

flower in a neighbor's backyard. A giant mount of feces in another's. But soon, the Platts find that their neighborhood is overrun with primordial beasts and surrounded by jungle: Oak Street is suddenly a suburban island in a prehistoric world.

The combination of an earnest family drama with CGI hijinks, plus increasingly nutty plotting, make 'The End of Oak Street' a fairly nonstop hoot.

Composer Michael Giacchino does his best John Williams impression to match. But Mitchell's film also increasingly detours from the Spielberg playbook. Only Mitchell would take a moment for a freaked-out Audrey to sneak into the car to pop a cassette in and listen to Steve Winwood's 'Valerie.'

And while it would be pushing it to say there's that much underneath 'The End of Oak Street,' its characters are united in keeping certain things secret out of fear that their spouse or kids or parents can't handle the truth.

The swiftness that the dinosaurs invade their neighborhood could be symbolic of any ecological disaster, but the subsequent challenges prove each member of the family can handle quite a bit more than expected.

It adds up to a good time that gives an old-school family adventure a darker, modern spin. Mitchell has quickly made suburbia his evident domain, where 'it,' or something else, is sure to follow.

— Associated Press