

KU Secures 4 Star Rating In AICTE IIC 6.0

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The University of Kashmir's (KU) Centre for Innovation, Incubation, and Entrepreneurship (CIIE) acting as Institution Innovation Cell (IIC) has achieved a notable 4-star rating in the AICTE Innovation Council (IIC) 6.0 for the academic year 2023-24.

Institutions with 4-stars are considered to be best performing institutions having streamlined innovation and entrepreneurship campus ecosystem.

KU Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Nilofer Khan congratulated the entire CIIE team for their consistent efforts and remarkable progress.

"This achievement is a reflection of the varsity's commitment to building a robust ecosystem for innovation and research. We will continue to support initiatives that encourage creativity and entrepreneurship among our students and faculty," she said.

Over the last four years, the University has steadily improved its rating from two stars to the esteemed four-star status, reflecting its growth in innovation-driven activities.

While congratulating the entire CIIE team, Registrar KU, Prof. Naseer Iqbal said, "This accomplishment shows the University's dedication to developing innovation and creating opportunities for our students and faculty to excel."

Director, IoT Zakura campus KU, Prof. M. Tariq Bandy, who is also the Chairman CIIE KU while congratulating the team said, "The 4-star rating is a collective achievement that highlights our teamwork and dedication. The CIIE team remains dedicated to advancing research, creativity, and enterprise to make impactful contributions to society."

The University also acknowledged the efforts of Dr. Bilal Ahmad Malik, Coordinator CIIE KU, the entire team at CIIE and the teaching and non-teaching staff whose commitment and hard work have been instrumental in this success.

This prestigious recognition reflects the University's dedication to developing innovation and entrepreneurship and reaffirms the varsity's position as a leading hub for innovation and entrepreneurship in the region—(KNO)



Braving severe cold, gardeners sowing tulip bulbs in Tulip garden. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Concerns Rise Over Private Maid Agencies In City

Agencies

Srinagar: The growing reliance on private human resource agencies for domestic helpers in Srinagar has raised serious concerns following repeated incidents of theft and other crimes involving non-local maids. These agencies, which supply domestic helpers, maids, and babysitters to Kashmiri families under formal agreements, must be now under scrutiny for their operational practices and the safety risks posed to households.

In the latest incident, Srinagar Police successfully solved a burglary case involving a non-local maid accused of theft in Umerabad, Srinagar. Acting promptly on the complaint, the police arrested the suspect and recovered stolen jewellery worth lakhs of rupees from her possession.

In recent years, the demand for domestic helpers has surged in Srinagar, driven by changing lifestyles and increasing household responsibilities. To meet this demand, hundreds of private placement agencies have sprung up across the Valley. These agencies enter into formal agreements with families, outlining terms that include bearing the general

expenses of maids, including health costs.

While these agreements aim to provide a structured and transparent process, the lack of stringent regulations has led to lapses in accountability. Many agencies fail to conduct comprehensive background checks or provide sufficient details about the helpers they recruit, leaving families vulnerable to risks.

The burglary case is not an isolated incident. Srinagar has witnessed several cases in recent years involving domestic helpers accused of theft, fraud, and even violent crimes. These incidents have prompted calls for stricter monitoring of private placement agencies and better verification processes for domestic workers.

Experts and activists have emphasized the urgent need for a regulatory framework to oversee the functioning of private placement agencies in Kashmir. "These agencies operate in a largely unregulated environment, which creates room for exploitation and criminal activities," said Dr. Shabir Ahmad, a sociologist talking with the Associated News Bureau. "The government must introduce guidelines to ensure accountability and protect both families and domestic helpers."

Proposed measures include mandatory registration of agencies, detailed documentation of employed workers, and regular audits by relevant authorities. Public awareness campaigns can also play a crucial role in educating families about verifying the credentials of domestic helpers before employing them.

The public reaction to these incidents has been one of growing apprehension. Many families are reconsidering their reliance on private agencies, with some opting for personal referrals instead. "We need domestic help, but the lack of trust in these agencies is a big concern," said Shahina, a Srinagar resident.

"The government must step in to regulate this sector and restore confidence." The swift resolution of Umerabad, Srinagar burglary case by Srinagar Police is commendable, but it underscores the broader issue of safety and trust in employing domestic helpers. The growing industry of private placement agencies in Kashmir requires urgent oversight to prevent such incidents and ensure the well-being of families and workers alike. Stricter regulations, coupled with public awareness, can create a safer environment for all stakeholders involved. (ANB)

DEO Srinagar Finalizes Preparations For Celebration Of National Voters Day

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The District Election Officer (DEO)/Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat on Friday chaired a meeting at Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex here to review the plans and preparations for celebration of 15th National Voters' Day-2025 to be celebrated on January 25.

Besides Deputy District Election Officer, the meeting was attended by all the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and

AEROs of eight Assembly Constituencies of Srinagar District and all concerned District level Officers.

During the meeting, the DEO/DC discussed in detail the preparations to be made and the activities to be conducted on the occasion of 15th NVD-2025. It was decided that the celebrations will be held at various locations across the District. There will be a main District level function, besides there will also be celebratory events across various Assembly Constituencies of the District.

PET Scan Available At SKIMS For Rs 14.5K, For Poor At Rs 10K'

Agencies

Srinagar: The Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) in Srinagar offers Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scans at a standard rate of Rs 14,500 per patient.

Medical Superintendent Dr. Farooq Ahmad Jan said that for economically disadvantaged patients, SKIMS provides PET scans at a reduced rate of Rs 10,000.

Replying to a query about private diagnostic centre charging Rs 18,000 at par with SKIMS, he said that it is wrong as SKIMS charges only Rs 14,500 per PET Scan while for poor patients, the charges are just Rs 10,000 and in case of second PET Scan for all patients only Rs 10,000 are charged.

He said that SKIMS is committed to provide better health care facilities with latest diagnostic facilities at minimal charges. It is important to note that SKIMS is currently the only government hospital in Kashmir equipped with a PET scan machine—(KNO)

Wani Family Bereaved

With profound grief and sorrow we inform the sad demise of Wife of Gh. Rasool Wani resident of Soura near Sabzi Mandi, who passed away on 16th January, 2025. The congregational Fateh Khwani will be held on Sunday, 19th January, 2025 at their ancestral graveyard situated at Malik Sahib Soura at 11AM

Note: Ladies are requested not to bring any eatables alongwith.

Bereaved Family
G R Electricals, Zahid Enterprises
Mujeeb Mushtaq, Dr. Arshid Wani
7006151988-7006744416-9796333353
 inf

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-AUCTION NOTICE

The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/FS, Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division:

Catalogue No.	Auction Start	Name of work
EAFZR-SLR25-11	31.01.25 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 15212/F1, 14630/F1, 14504/F1, 19226/F1, 19226/R1, 14630/R1, 12414/R1, 13152/F1, 19416/F1 & 19612/F1.

For other details and registration, please visit Railway website www.ireps.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 183/25

RASM-E-CHAHRUM

With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad demise of our beloved Sanaulah Khan S/o Ghulam Ahmad Khan R/o Gutlibagh, Ganderbal, on 15th January 2025. May Almighty Allah (swt) bestow His choicest blessings on the departed soul. Fateh Khwani will be observed on Sunday, 19 January 2025 at Sheri Bhat, Opposite Hanfiya Mosque, Alamgari Bazar, Srinagar.

Bereaved: Arif Ali Khan
Contact: 9596940348
 inf

RISHI FAMILY BREAVED



With profound grief we announce the sad demise of Mrs Ghulam Mohamad Rishi of Alamdar Colony Lalbazar Srinagar on Friday (17th of January 2025) after brief illness. Ijtimaye Fateha Khwani shall be held on Sunday 20th of January 2025 at 11.00 AM at our ancestral graveyard near Gani Memorial Stadium, Rajorikadal Srinagar. After that a Duaiya majlis will be held at our residence Alamdar Colony (C) Al-Farooq Lane near Boys RP School, Lal Bazar Srinagar, Inshallah.

Ladies are requested not to bring any kind of eatables with them.

BEREAVED
Rishi Family
9796137530 | 9419094265

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,245222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200


AIRPORTS
 SHEIK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BUIBHARA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

- Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)
- Mughal Road - (Closed)
- Srinagar- Leh- (Open)

 HIJRI CALENDAR 15 Rajab 1446	PRAYERS	
	FAJR	6: 08
	ZUHR	12:38
	ASR	4: 08
	Magrib	5:51
	ISHA	7: 15

This Day In History

- 1884 - General Charles Gordon departs London for Khartoum
- 1896 - British troops occupy Kumasi, West Africa
- 1913 - Turkish-Greek sea battle near Troy
- 1919 - The Paris peace conference (aka the Versailles peace conference) opens to draw up the treaties formally ending the Great War (WWI)
- 1941 - World War II: A counter-offensive is launched by the British against the Italians in East Africa
- 1943 - Soviets announce they have broken the long siege of Leningrad by Nazi Germany
- 1943 - US rations bread & metal - banning plastic bread reduce bakery demand for metal parts
- 1943 - The first Warsaw Ghetto Uprising
- 1945 - Soviet troops capture Krakow, Poland.
- 1945 - Soviet Armed Forces enter Krakow and push Germans out only to eventually occupy entire country.
- 1947 - Small river steamer sank on Yangtze River, kills 400
- 1959 Ruth Jessen wins LPGA Tampa Golf Open
- 1960 - US & Japan sign joint defense treaty
- 1960 - Capital Airlines Flight 20 crashes in Virginia, killing all 50 people on-board
- 1968 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalitinsk USSR
- 1969 - Expanded 4 party Vietnam peace talks began in Paris
- 1969 - United Airlines Flight 266 crashes into Santa Monica Bay, killing all 38 people on-board
- 1974 - Israel & Egypt sign weapons accord
- 1977 - Imran Khan takes 12 wickets in match for Pakistan win at the SCG
- 1977 - Scientists identify a previously unknown bacterium as the cause of the mysterious Legionnaires' disease.
- 1977 - Australia's worst rail disaster occurs in Sydney, killing 83 people
- 1978 - Geoff Boycott captains England for the 1st time, v Pakistan at Karachi
- 1978 - Thiokol conducts 2nd test firing of space shuttle's SRB
- 1981 - Iran accepts US offer of \$7.9 billion in frozen assets
- 1983 - IOC restores Jim Thorpe's Olympic medals 70 years after they were taken from him for being paid \$25 in semipro baseball
- 1988 - Airliner crashes in SW China, killing all 108 on board
- 1989 - Astronomers discover pulsar in remnants of Supernova 1987A (LMC)
- 1989 - IBM announces earnings up 10.4% in 1988
- 1990 - South Africa says it is reconsidering ban on African National Congress
- 1991 - Iraq launches SCUD missiles against Israel
- 1991 - US acknowledges CIA and US Army paid Manuel Noriega \$320,000 over his career
- 1991 - Eastern Air Lines goes out of business after 62 years, citing financial problems.
- 1993 - Martin Luther King Jr. holiday observed in all 50 states of the USA for 1st time

From KO Archives

Child Back After 12 Years

Observer News Service

BARAMULLA - A child who had crossed over to the other side of the line of control (LoC) at the age of five has returned to his home at Keran in the border district of Kupwara after turning 17. Identified as Babu Bhat s/o Taj Din Bhat, he crossed the LoC Thursday to the pleasant surprise of his grieving family.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 18 January, 2001)

RTI Goes Digital in J&K But With Flaws



Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat

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While the J&K RTI portal is a step forward, significant gaps remain, including the exclusion of key public authorities, technical issues, and lack of user support

Finally, the RTI has gone online in Jammu & Kashmir. As campaigners for the Right to Information Act (RTI), it has been our long-pending demand. My colleagues and I have been advocating for this for many years. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah recently launched the online RTI portal, which aims to enhance transparency and accountability in governance while simplifying access to information. The portal was formally launched on January 10, 2025, at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu. The Chief Minister was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, several Cabinet Ministers, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, and other senior officials.

Omar Abdullah congratulated the officers involved in developing the portal, emphasizing its transformative potential in simplifying the RTI application process for citizens.

“This initiative will provide easy access to government information under the RTI Act, empowering citizens with a faster, more transparent, and cost-efficient mechanism,” the Chief Minister said.

Flaws in the Portal

As an RTI campaigner, I, along with my colleagues, have noticed that the RTI portal is not user-friendly and lacks many features that could make it more effective. The J&K RTI portal is not modeled on the national RTI portal, which is used to access information from central government offices.

Within days of its launch, the portal developed a technical snag and stopped working. Though the issue was later rectified, such faults in a newly launched RTI portal demoralize applicants who have waited years for RTI to go online in J&K.

Many district officers designated as Public Information Officers (PIOs) are missing from the portal, including Chief Education Officers (CEOs), Chief Executive Officers, and Executive Officers of Municipal Councils and Committees. Key positions such as Chief Horticulture Officers, Chief Agriculture Officers, and Block Development Officers (BDOs), who frequently receive RTI applications offline, are also not included. Moreover, applicants cannot seek information from CEOs of various Tourism Development Authorities.

It is perplexing that if Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) are included in the portal, why are Chief Education Officers (CEOs), Chief Horticulture Officers (CHOs), and Chief Agriculture Officers (CAOs) excluded?

J&K Bank, KU, JU Not Included

Several significant public authorities, in-



cluding J&K Bank, Kashmir University (KU), Jammu University (JU), and others, are missing from the portal. This omission prevents applicants from accessing information from these institutions under the RTI Act.

The portal also lacks a mobile-friendly version. Unlike other websites that automatically adjust to cell phone browsers, this portal faces significant usability issues.

It is worth noting that the State Administrative Council and J&K State Information Commission (SIC) declared J&K Bank a Public Authority many years ago, yet the bank remains reluctant to provide information under the RTI Act. The government must ensure J&K Bank complies with transparency requirements and provides information through the portal.

Lack of Support from GAD Team

The General Administration Department (GAD) is the nodal agency responsible for implementing the RTI Act in J&K and managing the online RTI portal. However, there is a lack of coordination and support from the GAD team.

An official email address, gadit6648@gmail.com, has been provided for portal-related queries. Despite sending multiple emails, my colleague Syed Adil and I have received no response. On January 13, 2025, when the portal was down, numerous users contacted GAD via email but did not receive even an acknowledgment.

The Secretary of GAD and the Chief Secretary must address this issue seriously. A dedicated WhatsApp number could be introduced to provide real-time assistance for technical

issues related to the RTI portal.

Issues with Non-J&K Cell Numbers

Another significant issue is that cell phone numbers registered outside J&K do not receive OTPs when filing RTI applications. Under the RTI Act, every Indian citizen has the right to access information from public authorities in J&K, just as they do in other states and union territories. This technical oversight excludes J&K residents living outside the UT, who may have phone numbers registered in Delhi, UP, Bangalore, or elsewhere.

Conclusion

Filing online RTI applications offers numerous benefits. Applicants no longer need to travel to government offices or purchase Indian Postal Orders (IPOs), which are often unavailable in post offices. Moreover, the online portal ensures that PIOs cannot claim non-receipt of RTI applications, enhancing transparency and accountability.

While the J&K RTI portal is a step forward, significant gaps remain, including the exclusion of key public authorities, technical issues, and lack of user support. The GAD must address these shortcomings to make the portal a truly effective and accessible tool for citizens in Jammu & Kashmir.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat is Chairman & Founder of Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement

Putting the 'A' (accountability) in AI

Rameesh Kailasam & Ankur Jain

The emergence and development of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare signifies one of the biggest shifts in modern medicine. From early diagnosis and detection to personalised treatment plans, AI is pushing the limits of healthcare and opening up new possibilities which look promising.

However, to quote an oft-used line, “With great power comes an even greater responsibility.” To make sure that innovation does not outpace accountability, especially in a field with as high stakes as healthcare where lives hang in the balance, the promise of transparency, ethics, and trust must anchor every step of the journey. Trust is the bedrock of healthcare, and accountability is how AI should ideally earn it here. Without these, the promise that AI brings risks being overshadowed by doubt, inefficiency, and unintended consequences.

Transparency: The pillar of trust

Picture this: Treatment for a critical illness is delivered by an AI system. Would you accept its judgement without knowing how it reached that conclusion? Transparency is essential for fostering trust in such high-stakes scenarios. A recent Wolters Kluwer survey found that 90% of consumers believe clinicians need to be transparent about their use of AI in healthcare decisions, underscoring the critical role of “explainability” in patient acceptance.

Traceable AI systems ensure that every choice made is explainable, reproducible, and open to scrutiny. This isn't just about adhering to regulations like the European Union's (EU) AI Act or FDA guidelines for AI/machine learning in medical devices; it's about building trust in a technology that is crucial for human health. Without transparency, AI risks turning into a “black box”, which, in healthcare, is not just a technological challenge but also a moral imperative. The survey further noted that nearly four in five consumers are concerned about generative AI being used in medical diagnosis, reflecting the importance of accountability to mitigate errors and ensure ethical AI deployment.



AI as a partner, not replacement

AI lacks intuition, contextual understanding, and the ability to empathise — qualities that are fundamental in healthcare decision-making. According to EY's 2024 survey, while 96% of healthcare executives acknowledge AI's potential to improve efficiency, 83% express reservations about its role in tasks like personalising medical plans or assisting in diagnosis. Moreover, 91% stress the importance of human oversight to ensure ethical and effective outcomes.

This underscores the necessity of integrating human supervision at every stage of AI decision-making. AI excels at analysing vast data sets and identifying patterns that are imperceptible to the human eye. However, it must remain a tool and not become an autonomous decision-maker. The healthcare systems of the future will derive their strength from collaboration, where AI enhances human expertise without replacing the compassion and ethical judgement that only humans can provide. In this synergy lies AI's true potential — as a partner, not a replacement — empowering healthcare systems to deliver care that is ef-

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cient, ethical, and personalised.

Safeguarding patient data

Equally, accountability also demands an unwavering focus on data privacy and security. In healthcare, data isn't just raw information. It's a deeply personal story of a patient's health journey, often reflecting their most vulnerable moments. With cyber threats on the rise, safeguarding this data is more than a regulatory checkbox — it's a moral obligation.

Compliance with global privacy standards like the US' Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, the EU's General Data Protection Regulation or India's proposed Digital Private Data Protection Act provide a foundation, ensuring AI systems adhere to strict guidelines for safeguarding sensitive information. But accountability doesn't stop at compliance. It requires proactive measures such as advanced encryption, strict anonymisation protocols, and governance systems that guarantee patient data is safe and used only to enhance AI-driven care. If we lose the trust, we risk losing the very progress we aim to achieve.

The path forward

As AI continues to redefine the healthcare landscape, its long-term impact depends on how responsibly we build and deploy it. Accountability must be more than an abstract principle — it must be a practice embedded at every stage of the journey, from development to deployment. When transparency, human collaboration, and data privacy form the core of AI systems, the technology can transform healthcare into a trustworthy, smarter, and more compassionate ecosystem.

The “A” in AI will then stand for more than “artificial”; it will stand for “accountability”. In this lies the blueprint for a future where technology serves humanity — not just with intelligence, but with integrity, thereby empowering healthcare systems to deliver results more efficiently.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The article was originally published by Financial Express



Feats of a Kashmiri Polymath

Dr. Sohail Nasti: A Rheumatologist, Rescue Pilot, and Changemaker



KASHMIR IS PERHAPS THE ONLY PLACE IN THE WORLD WHERE CESAREAN DELIVERIES OUTNUMBER NATURAL BIRTHS. This unnatural trend raises concerns about the future stability of our community. Labor pain is part of the natural process, and by bypassing it, we are challenging the will of God

Nazir Ganaie
Dabirah Hassan

BORN in the quiet village of Sarnal in Anantnag, Dr. Sohail Nasti's remarkable journey spans continents and professions. As Kashmir's first research scientist in rheumatology, a rescue pilot, a cricketer and a global philanthropist, he has redefined what it means to live a life of purpose. In this insightful interview with *Kashmir Observer*, Dr. Nasti reflects on his diverse career, his efforts to revolutionize healthcare in Kashmir, and his mission to empower the next generation while leaving an enduring legacy of hope and progress.

KO: Welcome to Kashmir! It was a pleasure checking out your profile and seeing all the amazing hats you wear.

Dr. Sohail: Thank you for inviting me to *Kashmir Observer*. I am very glad to be a part of this world that people call 'paradise on earth'. You can see the artistry of Allah here, and truly, this is paradise on earth.

KO: You have been brought up in a small village in Sarnal, Anantnag. Tell us about your journey from your native village to Srinagar and beyond?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: I did my schooling at Hanafia School in Anantnag. Alhamdulillah, I had a good childhood. However, due to my naughtiness, I was shifted to a higher secondary school, where I completed my education before joining SKIMS Medical College. I was inclined towards medical science, and my parents too wanted to see me as a doctor. Ultimately, it was my fate that made me one. I studied at SKIMS Medical College and completed my internship in 2000. I was selected through the Public Service Commission and got my first posting in 2001.

KO: But why did you leave the government job?

I believe it's not a person who chooses his path; it's the blessings of our creator. I'm thankful for being endowed with certain qualities. I consider myself an innovative person—I don't like staying at one place for

too long. Coming from a family of 42 doctors, I felt I was getting lost in the crowd and wanted to do something different. While working with the government, I soon realized that I was a misfit in the system, as I was suspended multiple times during that period. In those days of lawlessness some people with influence would stop you in the corridor and demand prescription on cigarette covers. I would not obey. I was not satisfied with the kind of work I was doing. I believe Kashmir has immense talent, but the system pushes you down.

After completing a one-year house job in radiodiagnosis, I decided to leave Kashmir and qualified for exams abroad. My research on post-trauma stress-related inflammatory bone diseases took me to the University of Chicago and American College of Rheumatology. From there I traveled to various troubled places, including Afghanistan, and Syria, and worked with different militaries. Their dedication and discipline fascinated me and gave me new impetus to move beyond mere sitting at clinics and prescribing medicine to patients.

As adventure is perhaps in my DNA, I took a new plunge and qualified for civil aviation exams and became a rescue pilot. This career shift shocked my parents, as many members of our family—as I said around 40 of them—are doctors. I became the "odd one out." But I realized it's essential to pursue your passion.

Subsequently, I joined the Disaster Response Unit in the UK, US and a few more countries and served for many years. I was

part of rescue missions in Japan, Haiti, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

KO: So, were you the first Rheumatologist from Kashmir?

Dr. Sohail: No, I was the first research Scientist in Rheumatology from Kashmir.

KO: From doing an MBBS to specializing in a specific field, and then deciding to switch gear. Surely, there were people who supported you, and perhaps others who didn't?

Dr. Sohail: Absolutely. My teachers were instrumental, but above all, my mother was a major influence. She would always tell me: "Be someone the world will remember. Never hide behind brands or designer things because they don't define who you are. True value comes from within." I still recall a moment in Dubai. I was inside a swimming pool and someone recognized me in that state saying, "Oh, you're Captain Sohail." That's when my mother's words resonated with me: "If you've built yourself into something of substance, that's your brand not your expensive clothes."

KO: Any anecdotes from your young age which made you take radical decisions?

Yes. I was once heading home from college in Srinagar and sought a lift from a rich relative (a well respected doctor) who snubbed me saying 'get used to traveling in a bus'. Alhamdulillah I now own a fleet of



helicopters in the UK and several expensive cars. But I remain true to my conscience and in submission to my creator.

KO: So you fly planes now. How do you feel up there?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: When we qualify as pilots, we have to fly solo. During my first solo flight, I flew at an altitude of 5,000 to 10,000 feet over London. Seeing the entire city from above made me feel so small and insignificant. I thought to myself, «If I can see everything from here, how much more can the Creator see?» That experience instilled in me a deep sense of humility and reinforced my belief in the oneness of Allah. It also taught me that no matter how high you soar, you must eventually return to the ground. Humility is essential; ego suits only the Almighty.

KO: You are a medical doctor, turned rescue pilot, a renowned philanthropist and also a musician. Amazing feat. You also were joined by distinguished Pakistani classical singer Naseebo Lal in one of your Sufi renditions. Which profession is closest to your heart? Is it medicine, being a rescue pilot, acting, or singing? Because your critics often say, "Sohail Nasti wants to be everything." Which one defines you the most?

Dr. Sohail: Passion is what truly defines a person, whether it's in medicine, flying, or playing cricket. Alhamdulillah, with Allah's blessings, I've proven wrong the saying, "Jack of all trades, master of none." I'm a professionally qualified doctor, a certified pilot, and I've played first-class cricket representing J&K in Ranji. Acting wasn't something I was born into, but one of my films was shortlisted for the Cannes Film Festival. As for singing, I collaborated with the legendary singer Naseebo Lal for my first song.

KO: You have a rank of captain. Could you tell us something about your association with various militaries?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: There are several

paths one can take in aviation, but I was drawn to rescue missions. I was also interested in working in narcotics control. During my time in Haiti, I collaborated with the American Marines as a border control specialist. Displacement often leads to increased activity by drug mafias, and I was able to counter this effectively.

Drug mafias destroy communities and youth, so I pledged to work against them, especially in border regions. I believe one should lead a challenging and meaningful life.

Later I joined various departments in the UK to deliver my professional skills which I gained working across the world. Later I was trained as a pilot, which was like the cherry on top. I feel fortunate to have flown various aircraft, including the Cessna, R22, R44, R66, LongRanger, Puma and AS350Squirrel.

While working with the United Nations in Syria, our convoy was ambushed in Aleppo. My driver died in my lap and I sustained serious injuries. I was in a coma for two months. Alhamdulillah, I recovered. I believe Allah has given me a second chance in this world and since then, I've taken life very seriously. I want to make the most of my time and leave a meaningful legacy, living boldly and purposefully.

KO: Having spent significant time in the West and other countries, how does it feel to return to Kashmir? What is the biggest difference you see in the medical profession

and system?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: In the UK, doctors compete professionally to achieve excellence, whereas in Kashmir, the competition seems more focused on financial gain. I must apologize to my colleagues, as I am also part of the medical fraternity here, but I feel we are not working together to set the system right.

For example, Kashmir is perhaps the only place in the world where cesarean deliveries outnumber natural births. This unnatural trend raises concerns about the future stability of our community. Labor pain is part of the natural process, and by bypassing it, we are challenging the will of God. The proliferation of private nursing homes has created a nexus that promotes cesareans, and I believe people should not compromise on this. Mothers should provide the best foundation for their children through natural processes.

KO: Cesarean deliveries are common in Kashmir. You mentioned it is rare in the UK. How does the government there handle this, and tell us something about "bathtub deliveries"?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: In the UK, pregnant women are encouraged to lead active lives and maintain healthy diets. I've seen women going to the gym during pregnancy. In Kashmir, however, it's the opposite—expecting mothers are told to rest completely.

In 2019, Alhamdulillah, I was blessed with twins. In the UK, families are encouraged to be present during childbirth. The labor rooms there are more comfortable than five-star hotels in India. Mothers are advised to relax in labor baths. Interestingly husbands are encouraged to be by the side of their wives in labour. It's a natural and beautiful experience.

In contrast, I've witnessed horrifying practices in Kashmir. At one hospital, the nurses refused to hand over a newborn to the mother, saying, "We need chai" (a bribe). Such cruelty, where a child is withheld for money, is appalling. We need to address these issues collectively as a community.

KO: You referred to labor rooms in Kashmir hospitals negatively. Given the patient rush in government hospitals, don't you think there's a nexus forcing people toward private hospitals for cesarean deliveries?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: It's true that government hospitals are overwhelmed, but blaming the government entirely is not fair. We need to change our attitudes. In the UK, people volunteer to clean hospitals, but here, we litter them.

Moreover, private hospitals exploit patients by directing them away from government facilities. Government hospitals have become dens of bribery. We must work together to address these issues instead of passing the blame.

KO: Tell us about your philanthropy. What led to the founding of Mother Helpage?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: Mother Helpage was born out of a personal loss—my mother passed away in 1994. At that time, I was playing cricket and idolized Imran Khan, who also lost his mother and started his charity. I found solace in following a similar path. While in medical college, I began doing charity work, partly to honor my mother and partly to spend my time productively. Today, Mother Helpage operates in over 35 countries.

KO: There are around 12,000 NGOs registered in Kashmir, some of which have been deregistered. How is Mother Helpage different from others?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: First of all, you need a clear vision and mission. Charity should make a real impact. For instance, we have installed over 9,000 water wells in India and abroad. We could boast about providing a specific number of liters of water daily, but for me, that's not success. True impact lies in



reducing diseases through such initiatives. Whatever we do, it must be in collaboration with the government. Mother Helpage has partnered with the United Nations for many years. While some charities faced discrepancies, leading to government bans that affected others, Alhamdulillah, everything is getting back on track.

KO: What kind of work does Mother Helpage focus on?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: Our work is region-specific and based on the needs of the people. In Africa, we tackle one set of problems, while in Kashmir, we address entirely different issues. From 2025 onwards, we aim to make Mother Helpage fully sustainable. We're planning to establish skill centers, partner with startups, and provide stability through employment and skills.

For instance, if we help someone build a well, we'll ensure they also develop a kitchen garden nearby, enabling them to grow their own food rather than relying on handouts.

KO: You've initiated skill development projects. Could you elaborate on those?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: We've opened skill development centers and trained around 500 girls so far. Our goal is to provide dignified livelihoods and make them stakeholders in their ventures.

By leveraging our contacts in over 50 countries, we aim to revive Kashmiri culture and handicrafts and give it a global market.

KO: You were felicitated by an organization associated with Imran Khan. When did that happen, and what were the reactions?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: I was awarded by Imran Khan before he entered politics. At that time, we were both working for our mothers. Imran told me it was easier for him as he was a World Cup winner and a global brand. He appreciated my journey, acknowledging that I came from a small place without a big name. He gave me the Shaikat Khanum International Award, which was a great honor.

KO: Recently, Kashmir Observer reported a significant rise in cancer patients. Don't you think there's a need for an organization to support these patients financially? Should you consider partnering with SKIMS to assist cancer patients?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: I think the government needs to step in here. While people in Kashmir donate generously online, there's a lack of transparency, leading to wastage of funds. The government should create a mechanism where donations go into official accounts, ensuring the money benefits patients directly. For example, if a patient receives donations of ₹70 lakh but passes away, the remaining money often stays with the family instead of being returned. Transparency is crucial. The government could also start schemes offering discounts to cancer patients based on the stage of their illness.

KO: People in Kashmir often self-prescribe medicines. Your thoughts?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: Self-medication

is a form of addiction. When some of my relatives visit UK from Kashmir, their briefcases often contain more medicines than clothes. This is a very bad habit in Kashmir. You don't see such rampant use of medicines in other parts of the world. Even if you cross the Banihal Tunnel, you won't find as many medical stores as in Kashmir. Buying a pain killer in the UK is like getting a driving licence in Kashmir.

KO: You've produced popular music videos and have worked in films. Do you think Kashmir needs its own film industry?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: I've only watched one Kashmiri film, *Habba Khatoon* in my entire life. However, I believe Kashmir is brimming with talent. We need our own film industry to tell our stories and also to provide a platform for our younger generation to showcase their talent.

What would you tell people back home in Kashmir?

Dr. Sohail Nasti: In our journey to rebuild, develop, and uplift Kashmir, remember that each small step counts. Whether you're involved in agriculture, technology, education, or social services, your contributions are vital. It's time to break free from the constraints of the past and build a new narrative for Kashmir—one of unity, resilience, and progress.

I've proven wrong the saying, "Jack of all trades, master of none." I'm a professionally qualified doctor, a certified pilot, and I've played first-class cricket representing J&K in Ranji. Acting wasn't something I was born into, but one of my films was shortlisted for the Cannes Film Festival. As for singing, I collaborated with the legendary singer Naseebo Lal for my first song

Bumrah's Fitness In Focus As Selectors Pick CT Squad Today

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: The selection committee, headed by Ajit Agarkar, will convene here on Saturday to pick India's squad for the Champions Trophy, and they will have to deal with two tricky scenarios – the fitness of premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah and how to fit in Yashasvi Jaiswal in the provisional 15.

Bumrah had suffered back spasms during the recent Sydney Test against Australia and did not bowl on the final day at SCG.

He has been advised "off-loading" and his fitness is being monitored closely by the physios at the BCCI Centre of Excellence.

So, Agarkar and his colleagues along with head coach



Gautam Gambhir and skipper Rohit Sharma will ponder deeply over Bumrah's fitness status before taking a final call on his inclusion.

A clarity over the vexed scenario will be given once Agarkar and Rohit address a press conference post the selection committee meeting.

That Rohit attending the press do is also the clearest indication of him retaining the captaincy in the ODIs, despite swirling speculations about his future in Test cricket after a dismal tour to Australia.

Then there has also been a clamour from all corners to include Jaiswal in the squad.

The 23-year-old is in fine form right now, and he will also offer the left-hand variety at the top, reasons listed in favour of his selection.

But Jaiswal's selection could put him in direct competition with KL Rahul as Rohit, Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer are certainties as India's top four.

It could also be that Jaiswal will be given a chance against

England in the three-match ODI series, and prefer Rahul for the ICC event.

The squad for the rubber against England too will be picked on Saturday.

The primary wicketkeeper batter slot could be allotted to Rishabh Pant as Sanju Samson skipping the Vijay Hazare Trophy has not gone down well with the powers that be.

Dhruv Jurel could come into picture in that scenario as second stumper.

Senior pacer Mohammed Shami will be in the squad given that he has played most of the domestic matches, and has also been drafted into India's squad for the five-match home T20I series against England.

Short TAKES

Saqib Mahmood Gets Visa For India Tour After Delay

England fast-bowler Saqib Mahmood has finally received his visa for the team's upcoming white-ball tour of India, starting with the T20I series opener in Kolkata on January 22.



Mahmood, who is of Pakistani heritage, had faced a delay in procuring the travel document, forcing him to miss an England training camp in the UAE.

Mahmood had encountered similar issues in the past and, in 2019, he had to be replaced in an England Lions squad for the India tour due to a delay in obtaining his visa. A similar reason had prevented Mahmood from travelling to India for a Lancashire pre-season camp last year.

England will play five T20Is and three ODIs in India.

Neymar Says Mbappé Was Jealous Of Messi In Paris

Striker Neymar said his former Paris Saint-Germain teammate Kylian Mbappé became "a little jealous" after superstar Lionel Messi joined the French club in August 2021 in a free transfer.

Speaking in a podcast hosted by World Cup winner Romário released Thursday, the 32-year-old Brazilian who plays for Saudi club Al-Hilal added that big egos affected the performances of PSG in big matches.

Neymar made his comments after Romário asked whether Mbappé, who joined Real Madrid this season, "is annoying."

"No, he is not. I have my things with him, we had a little fight, but he was fundamental for us when he arrived. I used to call him golden boy. I always played with him, said he was going to be one of the best. I always helped, talked to him, he came to my place, we had dinner together," Neymar said.

"We had some good years of partnership, but after Messi came he was a little jealous. He didn't want to split me with anyone. And then there were some fights, a change in behavior," the Brazilian player added.

Haaland Signs 10-Year Contract With Man City Until 2034

Erling Haaland has signed a new contract at Manchester City through 2034, committing his long-term future to the Premier League champions with one of the most lucrative deals in soccer amid uncertain times for the club on and off the field.

City announced the deal – covering 10 years from the start of this season – on Friday for the 24-year-old Haaland, who has scored 111 goals in 125 games since joining the club from Borussia Dortmund in 2022 to establish himself as one of the best strikers in the world.

The deal is the longest in the Premier League, with Haaland reportedly earning around 500,000 pounds (\$600,000) per week.

The Norway striker will be turning age 34 when the contract expires.

J&K Para-Archer Rakesh Kumar Conferred Arjuna Award

Agencies

JAMMU: President Draupadi Murmu on Friday conferred the prestigious Arjuna Award to para-archer from J&K, Rakesh Kumar, in New Delhi.

Kumar, hailing from Reasi district, became the third para-archer to receive the Arjuna Award, following Harvinder Singh in 2021 and Sheetal Devi in 2024 and notably, two of the three recipients - Rakesh Kumar and Sheetal Devi - hail from J&K.

The Indian archery pair of Rakesh Kumar and Sheetal Devi had clinched the bronze medal in the mixed team compound event at the Paris Paralympics last year.

Rakesh Kumar represented India at the 2020 Summer Paralympics, held in Tokyo, Japan. He won a gold medal in the men's compound open section of the 7th Fazza Para Archery World Ranking Tournament, which was held in Dubai in February 2021.

Kumar is the highest-



ranked compound archer in India with a world ranking of No. 1. He was trained at the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board's Sports Complex and he is a native of Katra, Jammu.

Meanwhile, LG Manoj Sinha congratulated Rakesh Kumar on receiving the prestigious Arjuna Award.

LG Sinha while extending commendation said Rakesh has brought immense pride to Jammu and Kashmir and

the nation.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also sent his "heartiest congratulations" to Paralympian Rakesh Kumar on receiving the prestigious Arjuna Award.

Taking to X, Omar Abdullah said that Rakesh has made a name for himself in the field of para-archery. The CM added that Rakesh has served as an inspiration for all the people in Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

Rohit Trains With White-Ball Ahead Of Champions Trophy

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: India captain Rohit Sharma has been honing his white-ball skills in preparation for the upcoming ODI series against England and the Champions Trophy.

In a video on Instagram, the 37-year-old was seen playing his signature shots, including flicks, drives, lofted hits, and pulls against the white ball during a training session.

Following a disappointing tour of Australia, during which he even dropped himself from the final Test in Sydney, Rohit has been training with Mumbai's Ranji squad.

Mumbai face Jammu and Kashmir on January 23, but Rohit's participation in the match remains in doubt.

India's Champions Trophy campaign begins on February 20 against Bangladesh in Dubai, following the ODI series against England starting February 6.

Kohli Named In Delhi's 22-Member Provisional Squad

Star batter Virat Kohli has been named in Delhi's 22-member provisional squad for their next Ranji Trophy game against Saurashtra in Rajkot but doubts remain about his



participation after it came to light that he is nursing a niggle.

It is learnt that Kohli has intimated the Delhi and Districts Cricket Association (DDCA) top brass that he has a neck niggle that he sustained in Sydney during the final Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test against Australia.

He was treated by the physio there and as of now, there is no clarity on availability for the Ranji match starting January 23.

Talismanic wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant will feature in a Ranji Trophy game after nearly seven years although it has been learnt that he has declined captaincy, which means Ayush Badoni will continue in the role.



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