

#UNPLUGGED

Rediscover Life Offline

Screen-Free Week 2025 (May 5-11) invites you to unplug and reconnect, are you in?



n a world where scrolling, streaming, and swiping are second nature Screen-Free Week comes as a breath of fresh Celebrated this year from May 5 to May 11, the global initiative encourages people of all ages to switch off their

life experiences. Whether you're a student, professional, parent, or teen, you probably spend more time than you'd like on your phone or laptop. But what if, just for one week, you paused the pings, muted the notifications, and rediscovered the world beyond the screen?

global movement. It's not

about giving up tech forever,

it's about finding balance,

rekindling creativity, and

spending intentional time

away from digital distractions.

Joy in Simplicity

Ask yourself: When was

Remember how fun a board

the last time you read a book

without checking your phone?

Or had dinner without a

• Cook a new recipe from

• Try yoga or meditation

Write a handwritten letter

Tip: Make a list of screen

free activities and stick it

on the fridge for the whole

know vou're unplugging

• Plan ahead so that you're

Pro tip: Turn off non-essential

notifications or use 'Do Not

Disturb' mode for a head

not tempted to reach for

vour device out of bore-

without an app

space for quiet reflection.

game can be?

screen nearby?

scratch

to a friend

family!

dom

start.

screens and switch on real-



What's Screen-Free Week All About?

S tarted in 1994 as TV-Turnoff Week and rebranded in 2010 to reflect the rise of smartphones, tablets, and streaming services, Screen-Free Week is now a

Why Go Screen-Free?

H ere's what a week without screens can gift you! Better Sleep - No more olue light before bed.

More Focus - Say goodbye to constant multitasking. **Stronger Relationships**

More face time, less FaceTime. Mental Clarity - Create

Fun Ideas to Try (No WiFi Required!)

- N ot sure how to spend your screen-free hours? Trv these! Picnic in the park
- Paint or draw something. just for fun
- Read that book you've been meaning to start
- Play a board game with family

How to Make It Work

U nplugging doesn't have to be all or nothing. Here's

- how to ease into Screen-Free Week! • Set daily screen-free hours. • Create tech-free zones at
- home (like the dinner table or bedroom).
- Inform your circle, let them **Beyond the Week: Creating Lasting Balance**

fter Screen-Free Week A ends, reflect on how it felt. Which activities did you love? What surprised you? Carry forward what worked

and slowly build healthier tech habits into your everyday routine. It's not about ditching screens, it's about not letting them run vour life

So, are you up for the challenge? This May 5-11, unplug to reconnect, with yourself, your people,

and your passions. The screen can wait, real life is calling.



The Story Of Kashmir Waiting To Be Told





(Text is based on the conversations with A. S. Dulat)

ast month, on the night of 15th April, there was a book launch of A. S. Dulat's latest book. Minister and The Spy. the at International Centre

as Dulat recalls, in May 2024, he flew down to Delhi for the launch of Dulat's book *Covered Covert* at the India International Centre (IIC). It was on the day that Omar's constituency in Baramulla went to the polls for the parliamentary elections. At first, Dulat had been

unsure that Faroog would come. "No. no. of course. I will come." he assured. "It is Omar's election, ours in Srinagar is already over."

But it is reported that the book launch at IIC lacked all the exuberance and gaiety that always marked the book events of Dulat's books. About 15 to 17 people were present, and the atmosphere was sombre People were mostly professional colleagues, there more as a corps-despirit than celebrating a triumph.

Farooq put a stamp of approval on this feeling by putting out a statement in the press a few days later: "A. Dulat is a friend, he shouldn't have written this book!"

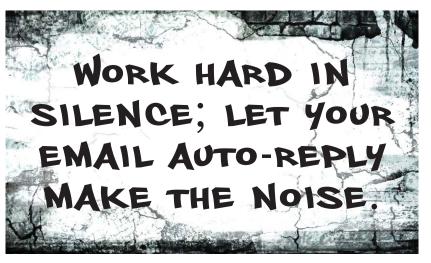
Dulat, however, says that when he began thinking of writing this. he talked it over with Doctor Sahib (as Dr. Farooq Abdullah is more commonly known in Kashmir). In fact, they spoke about it umpteen times. He never said no, but there was never a clear 'ves' until the summer of 2004, when Dulat finally began writing it

"Karo, na," he said. (Go ahead.) A S. Dulat Chief Ch



At the launch of the book, Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years, in 2015.

THE WALL



It was a response typical of the man. Doctor Sahib could be both reticent and forthcoming, depending on the time, place, and mood. That is why, rather than a biography. Dulat likes to think of it as a story.

Faroog with Paran and

Dulat at our

contestants

J.K.L.F.

wedding anniversary.

50th

One that had been wanting to be told ever since he first met Doctor Sahib in the winter of 1987. In October that year, Dulat had

received a call from his friend. According to Dulat, at the very first time he heard of Farooq Abdullah, he had probably entered into a political accord with Rajiv Gandhi in December 1986. At that time, Dulat was on an assignment as the security officer for a presidential visit to Belgrade

Romesh One morning Bhanderi, the secretary travelling with President Giani Zail Singh, excitedly brought a copy of The Times of India and exclaimed, "Dekho Giani ji ki khabar aayi hai.' The news was, of course, the

signing of the accord between Farooq and Rajiv. Giani responded to this accord with typical fatalism, "This is the beginning of the end of Farooa Abdullah

But like many others, according to Dulat, who tried to estimate where Faroog stood on the great political chessboard that is Kashmir, he was wrong.

According to Dulat, the subtitle of the book refers to 'an unlikely friendship,' not friendship in its truest sense, which implies that you are on intimate terms with another person.

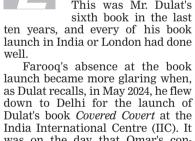
Dulat says that in the three decades he had known Farooq, he couldn't say with confidence that he truly knew him. "You see, he is the enigma of Doctor Sahib." Anyway, as the story goes, in

November 1986, the Rajiv-Farooq accord was signed as a roadmap to stabilizing the state, and Rajiv had Farooq installed as Chief Minister n Srinagar, after removing the then Chief Minister, Gul Shah. On 23rd March 1987, elections were held in the state. Conducted only four

humour, our relationship with him why should he have noticed a young is okay and he is on our side. Please, fellow on his first posting to see to that.' Kashmir It was only later he realised that It was puzzling because it was something he had also heard from even though Doctor Sahib appeared Chief Minister Arjun Singh, when not to notice anything, in reality, he he had gone to say goodbye before noticed everything. It was a quality shifting to his new posting in that kept even the laziest of Dulat's Srinagar. Arjun Singh had said, tribe alert. "You never knew what "Doctor Sahib is a nationalist and Doctor Sahib was observing and our best bet, so stay close to him." how he would bring it to your With this background, Dulat notice at a time of his choosing."

BABY BLUES





The Chief India

Why did he write the book?"

Most, explaining Farooq Abdullah's absence, wrote with a sense of regret, framing their words in hushed tones: "Why did he do it?



Honouring the Unsung Heroes of Communication: Interpreter Appreciation Day

A.S. DULAT

AN

UNLIKELY

FRIENDSHIP

bserved annually on the first Wednesday of May, Interpreter Appreciation Day celebrates the vital role interpreters play in bridging language gaps across various sectors, including healthcare, legal, and community services. In 2025, it falls on May 7. Established in 2013 by Joshua Jones, a deaf-blind advocate, the day acknowledges the dedication and skill of interpreters who facilitate clear and accurate communication, ensuring inclusivity and understanding in our diverse society. Whether through spoken languages or sign language, interpreters are essential in connecting people and fostering meaningful interactions across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

> FAROOQ WENT A STEP FURTHER AND OFFERED HIS OWN HELICOPTER TO DULAT'S SISTER TO FLY ADITYA TO DELHI IF SHE PREFERRED. HOWEVER, POMA, DULAT'S SISTER, DECLINED, EXPRESSING HER FULL FAITH IN THE KASHMIRI DOCTORS AT SOURA.

This is a fascinating account of Kashmir, written by one who is not merely an expert but, more importantly, whose emotional attachment to Kashmir and with the mercurial Dr. Faroog Abdullah is, perhaps, unrivalled. On one level, this is an honest and unvarnished account of events that have taken place in Kashmir since the 1980s to the present, but what is more fascinating is that it is an insider's account, unrivalled in terms of understanding the forces at work during a very turbulent period.

The author's sympathetic portrayal of Dr. Faroog Abdullah as a 'colossus' who dominated the course of many, if not most, events in Kashmir is closest to the truth and reality than most other portrayals. The true merit of the work, though, lies in recognizing the centrality of Dr. Abdullah's role as far as contemporary Kashmir is concerned, and also how critical Dr. Abdullah's role was in ensuring that Kashmir did not drift away from India.

The author's reference to Dr. Abdullah as the tallest of the modern-day Kashmiri leaders may again attract criticism from many, but it is the unvarnished truth and is acknowledged by a person, who is among the very few in the world who can be considered an expert on Kashmir The true worth of this book, written in conversation style, is how the narrative brings out a fundamental truth, that notwithstanding several other problems that India has had to face since independence, Kashmir is probably the most complex and enduring.

THE CHIEF MINISTER AND THE SPY Written with empathy and sympathy, but 'seeing with the mind's eye,' the author, who has a distinguished career in intelligence over several decades, has provided an insightful account of a chaotic phase in Kashmir's modern history. Few accounts of similar situations across the world guite compare with this eponymous work.

> -M. K. Narayanan, former National Security Adviser to the Government of India

#A.S. DULAT

months after Farooq had been appointed Chief Minister, it is widely believed that the elections were igged in order to prevent Delhi from losing control of Kashmir. The were Congress, National Conference, and Muslim United Front (M.U.F.). By all accounts, MUF leader Mohammed Yusuf Shah had won. Disillusioned, he took the name Saved Salahuddin and went to lead the rigid Mujahideen. Yasin went to lead the In the spring of 1987, the

turnout in the valley was massive. As counting progressed, it became apparent that Sayed Salahuddin was way ahead of his opponent, Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah of the N.C. With Salahuddin's lead growing by the hour, Mohiuddin left the counting centre thoroughly disappointed. However, he was soon called back and declared the winner of the Assembly seat by 4,289 votes. The backlash was immediate and vicious. The so-called rigging of the 1987 election became the focus of a bloodbath that rocked Kashmir. With the shadow of these stormy elections still over Kashmir. Dulat

predecessor left on his new assign-Before leaving for Srinagar, Dulat was called by I.B. Director M.K. Narayan and told, "Please make sure Dr. Farooq is kept in good

was advised by IB headquarters to

visit Srinagar on a recce before his

was introduced to Farooq at the farewell tea party of his predecesor. "I shook hands with Doctor Sahib and then sat quietly in a corner." Farooq appeared to take absolutely no notice of Dulat, and as Dulat wrote, to be fair to Farooq.

Farooq in a thoughtful mood at Dulat's residence in December 2024.

Formord In M.K. XARADANAN, former NSA and DIB

Dulat's first task as I.B.'s station-incharge in Srinagar was to gain a meeting with Farooq. Farooq had been playing hard to get for a few weeks since Dulat's arrival. In time, Dulat learned that this was part of Farooq's style of dealing with peo-

> Finally, a call came summoning Dulat to his official residence. Even more apprehensive, Dulat asked his colleagues what he should address him as when he met him. Should he call him Farooq Sahib or Dr. Abdullah?

> Then, a secretary and security advisor to the Chief Minister, O.P. Butani, came up with, "He is known as Doctor Sahib. That would be good

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

So, Dulat went to meet Farooq, armed with just his colloquial nickname and scraps of information about the man himself. When Dulat arrived at Doctor Sahib's home on Gupkar Road, he was already out of the house, heading towards his car with an impatient air. Dulat was taken aback. "Didn't

we have an appointment? "Come on." he said brusquely registering Dulat's question. "Hop into the car with me. We will talk on the way

"Where are we going?" "To the airport," as it turned out. Farooq had a flight to Delhi.

Dulat writes, "I have forgotten what we talked about that day." But he discovered on that scenic drive that Farooq loved to be behind the wheel of a car. It was a pleasant way to start an acquaintance, albeit a trifle unusual.

As they neared the airport. Farooq glanced at Dulat and said. "I am coming back in a few days and we will meet again.

Dulat went back to the office. wondering what sort of unconventional interaction this was. Chief Ministers did not frequently command the IB head to hop into a car on the way to the airport, nor did they care to drive themselves.

But these were still the early days, and Dulat wasn't quite used to flinging protocol out of the window in his interactions with Farooq. So. he phoned him and requested time when his wife and he could call on

Faroog immediately disarmed him. "What is this all-on-one business?" he demanded. "Come and have a meal with us at home."

Dinner at the Abdullah home soon became a regular part of Dulat and his wife's life. The food was always superb, and they soon got to know Mollie, Farooq's wife.

ZITS

She was intelligent, attractive and restful. Mollie came from a working-class family in Suffolk. Her father worked for a transport company, her brother had joined the Roval Air Force, and her sister taught at a school. They were traditional English folks with a quiet, sturdy characteristic that defined them.

From the start, Dulat and his wife liked Mollie very much. She was English to her tips, though she wore her salwar kameez beautifully, merging perfectly with the Abdullah family.

"Would vou like a drink?" Faroog asked as soon as Dulat and his wife arrived for their first meal and the inevitable pleasantries were

Dulat was a bit startled at the prospect of a Chief Minister offerng him, the local head of IB, a drink but decided to go with the

don't mind one.' "Yes, of course, I think I'll have a

drink," he said, beginning to pour them both one. And so it was. Faroog and Dulat

had a drink, dined, and talked about many different things. It was the first of many such meetings, and it opened the doors to a friendship that lasted three decades.

What also strengthened their bond was the friendship between Dulat's wife. Paran. and Mollie They spent a lot of time together while Dulat was at work. Paran had no special friends in Srinagar, so, Mollie became a comforting and close companion.

Doctor Sahib was also very caring towards Dulat's family. He often went out of his way to help them. not as a favour, but as a natural extension of his warmth. This trait was evident during a particularly difficult time when Dulat contract ed COVID. Though the attack was mild, Paran insisted he be admitted to the hospital. Dulat was reluctant and even caused a minor fuss Concerned, Paran rang Farooq and said, "Look at how your friend is behaving. Please speak to him." Doctor Sahib did not hesitate He called Dulat and in his familiar. reassuring tone said. "Come along.

you out of there in no time." True to his word, Farooq kept in touch and called Dulat every morning without fail. "Arrey, kya haal hai?" he would ask. "Take vour medicines and rest. Don't worry about anything." Dulat was touched by these small but meaningful gestures of friendship and care

Another incident that remains etched in Dulat's memory was when his sister and her family came to visit. His son was also home for the holidays, and together with the cousins, they formed a lively, youthful group. One night, four of them decided spontaneously to drive to Pahalgam after dinner. However, near Pampore, they realized it was too far and decided to turn back. On their way, the car spun out of control, turned turtle, and Dulat's nephew Aditva bore the brunt of



Dulat with Faroog.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman







vou must focus on getting better. Between us and Allah, we will have

Kashmiri doctors at Soura.

To this day. Dulat says that Poma has not forgotten that moment. For her, Farooq, more than even the skilled doctors, was the man who saved her son's life. Farooq, too, never forgot Aditya. He continued to inquire about him at every opportu nity, and years later, he attended Aditya's wedding, a gesture that

Dulat and his family remember with deep gratitude To be continued... rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

Being new to Srinagar, Dulat

the accident.

was unsure whom to turn to. Paran,

"If you are having a drink, I



however, walked across to Doctor Sahib's lane to seek help from Mollie, Instead, she met Faroog at the gate. Without hesitation, he calmed her and advised that Aditva be transferred to the Soura Medical Institute, Srinagar's equivalent of AIIMS, where he assured her that the doctors would take good care of

Aditya, who had suffered seri ous injuries, regained conscious ness after two days. Faroog went a step further and offered his own helicopter to Dulat's sister to fly Aditya to Delhi if she preferred. However, Poma. Dulat's sister. declined expressing her full faith in the