A.S. DULAT

UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP

THE CHIEF
MINISTER
THE SPY

FRIDAY 23 May 2025

राष्ट्रदुत

**#J'ADORE** 

## Scarlet Statement

Shannon K stuns in custom Red Gown by Josh Birch Jones at Mission: Impossible 8 Cannes Premiere!



#### Sebetina Reddy

nternational singer Shannon K, turned heads at the Mission: Impossible 8 premiere at the Cannes Festival, dazzling in a breathtaking custom red gown by award-winning British

designer, Josh Birch Jones. The show-stopping couture piece, flown in from London, showcased Birch Jones' signature blend of structured elegance and modern glamour. As one of the youngest and most celebrated members of the British Fashion Council, Birch Jones collaborated with Shannon to create a look that perfectly embodied her hold vet sophisticated red-carpet style. The vibrant gown, tailored to perfection earned widespread praise

and statement colour. "Cannes always feels magical, but this year was even more special," said Shannon. "Wearing Josh

for its timeless silhouette

Birch Jones' incredible red gown made me feel powerful and elegant. I'm grateful to be part of both the fashion and film conversations happening on such an important global stage. Earlier in the day,

Shannon also made a stylish appearance at the Vanity Fair Luncheon, continuing to solidify her status as a rising force in international enter-

In addition to her red-car pet appearances, Shannon will be joining the cast and crew of 'Tanvi The Great,' the directorial debut of legendary actor Anupam Kher. She lent her voice to a poignant track in the film, composed by Oscar-winning music director M.M Keeravani (RRR), marking a significant creative milestone in her cross-cultural career

From performing in Coachella this year to iconic premieres to cinematic collaborations, Shannon K continues to make her mark with grace, talent, and global appeal making her father. Kumar Sanu, proud.

Shailaza Singh

t was an evening thick

with memory, candour,

and unanswered ques-

tions as A.S. Dulat, for-

mer RAW chief,

Kashmir whisperer,

and now a three-time

author, arrived in

Jainur to discuss his

latest book. The Chief

Minister and The Spy. Seated along-

side Rajesh Sharma, Editor,

Rashtradoot, and Ajay Singha,

Senior Advisor, FICCI, Dulat took

the audience on a journey through

Kashmir's shadowed corridors,

interlaced with loyalty, betrayal,

and a peculiar intimacy with one

This was Dulat unplugged, remi-

niscing, revealing, refusing to spin.

**Dulat's** loyalty to Farooq

Abdullah is not disguised; it is at

the very heart of his book. "He

was always Delhi's man," Dulat

said, "and yet Delhi never gave

him his due." From his anoint-

ment in 1981 as Sheikh Abdullah's

successor, Faroog positioned him-

self as the bridge between

Srinagar and New Delhi. "But

Delhi never saw the value," Dulat

Farooq Was Delhi's Man,

This was no dry policy seminar.

And Yet, Always Let Down

man: Dr. Faroog Abdullah.

by Delhi

Poet and a YouTuber

laments. "They wasted him."

Through the 1980s and '90s, Dr.

Abdullah was the face of modera-

tion in Kashmir, a man willing to

work with the Centre, to keep the

state within the Union's fold. And

yet, Delhi treated him with suspi-

cion. "He should have been our

have been President, Instead, he

was repeatedly sidelined."

Foreign Minister. Hell, he could

Dulat's bitterness is personal

He wasn't just a spy watching from

the wings. He was Faroog's handler.

His friend. His sounding board. The

man to whom Faroog once said.

"Don't lie to Delhi. But don't lie for

Dulat's memory, January 1990.

"Farooq resigned the day

Governor," Dulat recalls. "He saw it

as betrayal. Delhi had promised

him Jagmohan wouldn't return.

George Fernandes had even

posed, Farooq knew what was com-

Farooq's man. I left Kashmir soon

after. Booted out, to be blunt." He

chuckles at the memory but the bit-

terness is palpable. "And the winter

of 1989-90? Horrific, Militancy had

broken out. The Valley was on fire."

If the book is about espionage and

power, it is also deeply about friend-

A Relationship Beyond

When Jagmohan was reim-

"By then, I was branded as

assured him.'

ing. So did Dulat.

was reappointed

The Jagmohan Betrayal

The Key Is
Understanding Kashmir



ship. Dulat does not hide his affection for Farooq. "He's not just a politician. He's a doctor. He's a son of Jaipur, I still call him when I'm worried about my blood pressure. There is a recurring note of warmth, almost romantic nostalgia. Dulat insists that Farooq

the world. Is this exaggeration? Perhaps. But for a man who has seen prime ministers up close, from Atal Bihari Vaipavee to Narasimha Rao, Dulat's praise doesn't come cheap. "Farooq was sharp. Shrewd. He played the game. But he never

Abdullah is "one of the tallest lead-

ers in the country," perhaps even

On Article 370: "The Hurt and The 1990 Breakpoint Wasn't the Law. It Was the One moment remains etched in Humiliation."

betrayed India. Not once."

**Much** of the post-publication buzz around The Chief Minister and The *Spy* has come from Dulat's remarks on Article 370. Some media headlines interpreted his words as suggesting that Faroog might have supported the abrogation if taken into confidence.

Dulat is quick to correct this: "Faroog knew 370 would go eventu ally. The BJP had said it clearly.

lived through the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits.

That wasn't the hurt. The hurt was

that no one spoke to him. That he, a

lifelong supporter of the Indian

state, was detained without a

daughter and sister were picked up

for a night. That humiliation?

n't plead. Just said, quietly, that

Delhi always does what it wants.

and Kashmiris, well, they're left to

Always a Spy, even in a

But Dulat is a spy at the core,

always has been. Throughout the

conversation, he sat with half

feel whatever's left behind.

**Book Launch** 

He didn't raise his voice. He did-

Γhat's what cut deep.<sup>3</sup>

He goes further. "Even his

understated mastery of saying just enough to stay interesting, but never

man, but in a public forum, especially in front of a curious, educated

audience, it created unease. There were people in that room who had

closed eyes, as if mulling over

something distant, possibly unre-

lated. And yet, he missed nothing.

People tried to corner him with

direct questions, about militancy,

Farooq Abdullah, and intelligence

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isfied, especially those who had

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Dulat for you, generous with

words, stingy with truth. He made

the room feel close, even as he held

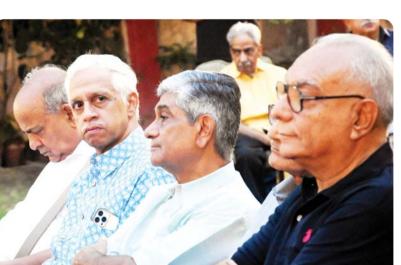
The Ghost of Trust: What

**Dulat Never Said Aloud** 

the real story far, far away.

What lingered in the room long after A.S. Dulat left wasn't what he said, it was what he didn't. The W hat lingered in the room long after A.S. Dulat left wasn't what he said, it was what he didn't. The silences. The careful deflections. The silences. The careful deflections. The understated mastery of saying just enough to stay interesting, but never dangerous. That, in dangerous. That, in many ways, is the hallmark of a seasoned intelligence many ways, is the hallmark of a seasoned intelligence man, but in a public forum, especially in front of a curious, educated audience, it

There were people in that room who had lived through the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. Who had watched the Valley erupt in the '90s. Who had buried friends, field reports, and headlines. They came looking for answers, maybe not full confessions, but at least emotional resonance. Instead, they got the steady, inscrutable poise of a man



recent ones, Dulat offered truths that were broadly correct, but clinically detached. He name-checked Mossad, 9/11, Hamas. He spoke of structural lapses in security worldwide, never quite zeroing in on India's own blind spots. It wasn't

real scoop, not what Dulat revealed "You Can't Fix Kashmir but what he proved: that in the Without Understanding It" world of intelligence, even after etirement, the truth is never free t is rationed, coded, and cloaked. The discussion wasn't limited to And men like Dulat are not here to Farooq Abdullah. Dulat fielded ques-

who whisper, endure.

But Dulat is a spy at the core, always has been. Throughout the

conversation, he sat with half-closed eyes, as if mulling over something

distant, possibly unrelated. And yet, he missed nothing. People tried to corner him with direct questions, about militancy, Farooq Abdullah, and

intelligence lapses, but he parried each one with grace and ambiguity. Never

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scoop. That's Dulat for you, generous with words, stingy with truth. He made the

room feel close, even as he held the real story far, far away.

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And perhaps, in that, lies the

ell you what happened. They are

In Kashmir, where betrayal is

he currency of politics, restraint is

often more powerful than rhetoric.

Oulat, more than anvone else.

nderstands that words in the

wrong hands can ignite fires that

take decades to put out. He's seen it

happen when casual promises by

Delhi went unkept, when whispered

threats were misinterpreted as poli-

cy, when one public misstep

still, it seems, to silence.

never quite know.

Matters

ere to make you realise you'll Why does he feel such empathy for Kashmir? "Maybe because I was taught **Restraint as Power: Why** to side with the underdog," he says. **Dulat's Silence Still** 'Maybe it's Sikh values. Maybe it's just

He brushes off the criticism that **And** yet, for all the frustration his Kashmir's identity is being made excepsilences provoke, there's another tional. "Every state has identity. But Kashmir is different. It's the only vav to look at Dulat's evasions. Not as cowardice. Not as indifference. Muslim-majority state. It's where the But as a form of practiced loyalty, idea of India is tested most." not to governments, but to a deeper On intelligence failures, Dulat is

blunt: "Every time something goes wrong, it's called an intelligence failure Whether it's 9/11 or Hamas, But we don't talk about how many failures we

Why Jaipur Still Matters **The** event also had a local, personal flavour. Dulat spoke at length about his early IPS days in Jaipur, serving under Ajay Singha's father and living in Sultan Singh ji's home. "They treated me and my wife like family," he recalled. "Those were golden

Even Dr. Farooq's medical college years in Jaipur came up. "He hasn't forgotten. Jaipur is part of who he is." And that perhaps is the thread of Dulat's narrative, past and present woven together, people remembered not just for their politics but for their kindness, their humanity. their contradictions.

Delhi, Always Distrustful Because in the Valley, the ones who shout rarely last. But the ones Why did Delhi never trust the Abdullahs? Dulat offers layered

Sheikh Abdullah's long jail stints, his flirtations with independence, and his alleged links with Americans and Chinese seeded a paranoia that never quite left tions on intelligence failures, integra-Nehru's successors. Farooq, despite

tion, and identity nis loyalty, inherited that suspicion. "Delhi wanted him to follow. But Farooq was his own man. And Delhi doesn't like independent men.' "No, I Never Played Games With Farooq. He Was Too

> One of the most poignant moments came when Dulat was asked if he had played a double game, being Farooq's friend and Delhi's inform ant. "No," he said firmly. "You

couldn't play with Farooq. He was too big. He knew I reported back. But he trusted me anyway. That's the kind of man he was.' The Legacy So, what is Faroog Abdullah's lega-

cy? Dulat doesn't hesitate. "He was never a separatist. Never asked for independence. Only autonomy Only dignity. And he always believed that Kashmir belongs with India, if India treats it with That, perhaps, is the heart of the book. Not just about a chief

administered.

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minister and a spy. But about a rela-

tionship, tested, bruised, but never

broken. And about a valley that still

waits to be understood, not just





created unease

#### shadows, listening, facilitating, witnessing. That is the job of a spy. But in Kashmir, it became something more: a delicate art of holding the fabric together, even when it was already torn. So, while his refusal to 'tell all'

may disappoint a journalist, a historian, or even a grieving citizen, for Kashmir itself, perhaps that discretion was necessary. who had walked through fire with derailed years of quiet backchannel both Delhi and Srinagar and learned to never flinch. When asked about intelligence failures, even

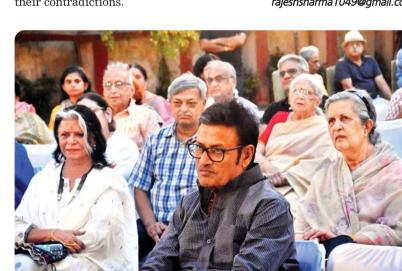
ecause in a state crawling with microphones and egos. Dulat never

**B** tried to outshine the people he worked with. He stayed in the

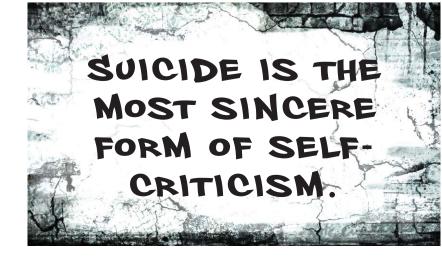
made people uncomfortable. There is a question at the heart of Dulat's presence, one he never answered directly: What do we owe the truth, when the truth is wrapped in national interest? He didn't betray the country that trained him, but neither did he serve the full hunger of the citizens

dishonesty. It was discipline. And it

diplomacy. Maybe that's why he speaks as if every sentence still has consequences. Farooq Abdullah trusted him, not because Dulat was loud, but because he wasn't. Because in a state crawling with microphones and egos, Dulat never tried to outshine the people he worked with. He staved in the shadows, listening, facilitating, witnessing. That is the job of a spy. But in Kashmir, it became something more: a delicate art of holding the fabric together, even when it was already torn. So, while his refusal to 'tell all' may disappoint a journalist, a historian, or even a grieving citizen, for Kashmir itself, perhaps that discretion was necessary.



### THE WALL



## **BABY BLUES**

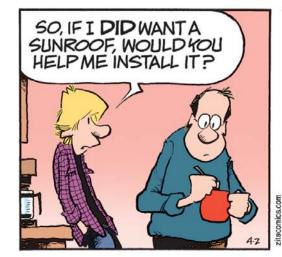


### ZITS

HMM.

ALLEAD.

TAHT.



# CARS LIKE YOU'RE GOOD WITH SPORTS.





