

Onus on Pakistan to restore peace in J&K: Bodansky

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Som Chivukula in California For over a decade, Yossef Bodansky has been fiercely attacking Pakistan in his lectures and books, holding Islamabad responsible for escalating terror attacks in the region and for making itself a fountainhead of religious fundamentalism. He brought that message to more than 200 academics, community leaders and politicians who attended a daylong seminar in Fremont, California, recently. Organized by the Indo-American Kashmir Forum, the event was called 'From Paradise to Ideological Battleground'. Unless Pakistan gives up its efforts to acquire Kashmir to make up for Jinnah's 'lost heritage', there will be no peace and stability in the region, Bodansky said. Getting Kashmir out of Indian hands had always meant for Pakistan a mission to achieve the unfulfilled task of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The mission became even more acute after Pakistan was dismembered. Bodansky, author of a best-selling book, 'Bin Laden, the Man Who Declared War on America', is convinced that though three decades have passed since East Pakistan (Bangladesh) became independent, Islamabad has not been able to reconcile to that fact. Bodansky, who is also director of the United States Congressional Task Force on Terrorism, has persistently said that every ruler in Pakistan fans religious fundamentalism and international terrorism to retain power. The crisis in Kashmir constitutes an excellent outlet for the frustration at home, an instrument for the mobilization of the masses as well as for gaining the support of the Islamic parties and primarily their loyalists in the military and the Inter-Services Intelligence, Bodansky has said on many occasions. The ISI has a major interest to continue the crisis, he has written. Back in the 1970s, Pakistan started to train Sikhs and other Indian separatist movements as part of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's strategy for forward strategic depth. Pakistan adopted the sponsorship of terrorism and subversion as an instrument to substitute for the lack of strategic depth and early warning capabilities. Pakistani-sponsored terrorists and Pakistani intelligence operatives would be able to warn Pakistan of any impending Indian invasion and then launch a guerrilla warfare against the Indian Army even before it reached the border with Pakistan. Therefore, sponsoring separatist subversion has become a crucial component of Islamabad's national military strategy. It took Islamabad nearly a decade after East Pakistan became independent to reorient its strategy in Kashmir. During the 1980s, the ISI completed a vast training and support infrastructure for the Afghan resistance that was also used for the training and support of other regional groups, he said. There was a corresponding ideological development in Indian Kashmir. Since 1984, virtually suddenly, the prevailing popular sentiment in Indian Kashmir was that 'Islam is in Danger', and that sentiment, rather than nationalism, began mobilizing the youth. And that sentiment still continues, he said in Fairmont. I am afraid in the foreseeable future that there is no solution (for the insurgency in Kashmir) in sight unless there is a drastic change, Bodansky said. Kashmir is a classic case of state sponsorship taking over an indigenous nationalist movement, he continued. The situation in Kashmir has been fostered by the involvement of Pakistan's rulers, Bodansky added. The world will be meeting again and again to discuss Kashmir. But Jeevan Zutshi, one of the conveners of the forum, rejected Bodansky's pessimism. I didn't agree with that because I feel there's always a solution to a problem, Zutshi said. The daylong event that drew several academics and politicians had Congressman Jim McDermott (Democrat, Washington) as a keynote speaker. Kashmir is an integral part of India, McDermott, co-chairman of the India caucus, said. There are no ifs, ands or buts. McDermott also praised Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for his role in extending India-US relations and said he should also be recognized for inviting Pakistani leader General Pervez Musharraf for the upcoming peace talks. But earlier in the day, speakers, including Bodansky, weren't sure the talks would bring any peace. What is happening today is an ethnic cleansing of the Hindus by the Muslims, said Damodar Sardesai, an esteemed professor of history at the University of California, Los Angeles. India and Pakistan have to

target a more durable peace, not a convenient peace. Sardesai said Kashmir had always been part of India and its cultural roots lie in the country. Yet there are massacres happening daily, partly as a holy war and partly as a separatist movement . ArthurJ Pais contributed to this report