

Symposium on Kashmir to be held in US

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Possible avenues for the resolution of the Kashmir issue will be discussed at a symposium being held here next month, which will be attended, by experts and policy makers, including US Congressman Jim McDermott. The symposium, titled From Paradise to Ideological Battleground, is being held on June nine to inform and educate the mainstream American as well as the ethnic Indian communities about the latest developments in Jammu and Kashmir, symposium convener Jeevan Zutshi said.

The Indo-American Kashmir Forum (IAKF), a leading organization representing Kashmiri pandits in the US, is organizing the symposium to give greater visibility to the Kashmir issue, he said. Right now many things are happening. There are lots of back door meetings that are taking place back in India as well as here, he said. "We want to make sure that Kashmiri pandits are also part of the decision-making process. That the Kashmiri pandits get a fair deal," Zutshi added. Among others attending the symposium are director of terrorism task force of the state department Yossef Bodansky, former US ambassador Teresita Schaffer of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Prof Sardesai of UCLA and Prof Raju Thomas of Marquette University, Milwaukee. Indian consul general in San Francisco R M Abhyankar and mayor of Fremont Gus Morrison are also expected to speak at the event. IAKF said the Kashmir situation had been further complicated by the introduction of Islamic fundamentalism and Talibanism, with insurgents justifying their violent acts on the concept of jihad and bringing extreme and widespread misery to the civilian population of the state. An endless stream of Pakistan-trained mercenaries and terrorists flood the state every year, with thousands of "madrassas" and terrorist training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan acting as jihad factories for young Muslims from around the world, it said. The ultimate target of this jihad enterprise is not just Kashmir, but the rest of India, and ultimately the entire world, it said. The daylong symposium will be followed by a cultural evening, which will include a preview of a documentary Sharnarhi Apne Desh Mein (refugees in their own land) by Mumbai-based film producer Ashok Pandit. (PTI)