

Barack Obama invites Nawaz Sharif to visit US

23/07/2015 20:37 by admin

Islamabad: US President Barack Obama has invited Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for an official visit, a move seen here as mark of support for his policies, particularly efforts to improve ties with neighbours including India.

Sharif has been under pressure from the powerful army over his overt inclination for peace with India. An official of the Prime Minister's Office told PTI that Obama has invited Sharif for a trip towards end of October.

It will be an important visit. It shows that the US supports policies of the (Sharif's) government to create peace in the region by defeating militants and strengthening economy, the official said on condition of anonymity. The formal invitation is expected to be issued in coming weeks.

Sharif is also expected to visit the US in September for the UN General Assembly annual session and on its sidelines, he will co-chair a summit on peacekeeping. The October trip is part of bilateral arrangement and will be separate from the UN session visit. It will be Sharif's second visit after the first one in 2013.

Obama's invite comes at crucial time when Pakistan has almost cleared North Waziristan tribal region of al-Qaeda linked militants and helped kick-start a peace process between Afghan government and Taliban- both key demands of the US.

The US visit will also help boost Sharif's regional peace policy aiming to build peaceful ties with all neighbours. His policy towards India has been under scanner back home due to reservation by the military, which controls the security and foreign policy of the country.

The US has deep interest in normalisation of ties between India and Pakistan and has been pushing the two sides for better ties. It is believed that the US played a role in the recent meeting between the prime ministers of the two sides in Russia, where they agreed for meetings between their top officials.

Despite the tension, Sharif persisted with his peace initiative and sent traditional gift of mangoes to his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, which drew immense criticism from media, pro-military experts and parties.

- PTI