

## **Adopt 'aggressive approach' against terror safe havens: US to Pak**

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**Washington:** The US has pushed top Pakistani leadership to adopt "an aggressive approach" against terrorist safe havens inside the country and warned that continuation of the current policy would adversely affect its ties with India and Afghanistan, a top Obama administration official has said.

US National Security Advisor Susan Rice in her meetings with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif and her counterpart Sartaj Aziz this week made it clear that they need to do more to confront the terrorist groups.

"Rice noted that terrorist and other militant acts continue to emanate from Pakistani soil and that has developed into a key source of regional friction between Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as Pakistan and India," the official told PTI, describing the talks as frank.

Terrorism emanating from the Pakistani soil would be the key issue of discussion when Prime Minister Sharif travels to Washington to meet President Barack Obama at the White House on October 22, the official said.

"So addressing this challenge of safe havens that some militant groups have on Pakistani soil will be an imperative for Pakistan's ties relations with its neighbours and with the US. Some of these actors have made it a point of targeting US and coalition forces in Afghanistan," the official noted.

"So it is a primary concern to us and especially with the uptick of the violence in Kabul, this is certainly a priority for us to see that Pakistan takes a very aggressive approach in dealing with the Haqqani network and other actors," said the official, privy to the conversations that Rice had with Pakistani leadership during her day-long trip to Islamabad.

"Ambassador Rice was clear that Pakistan needs to do more to confront the Haqqanis and other similar groups. These are groups that have not only taken Afghan lives, also those of coalition forces including Americans, something we deeply care about and came up in discussion," the official said.

Rice also discussed issues of Afghan reconciliation efforts and sought the help of Pakistan on this. Among other issues included climate change, economy, energy, non-proliferation, global health and girls' education.

Relationship between India and Pakistan, the official said, "was certainly an issue of discussion" but "it was not immediate emphasis for the meeting." It was certainly one of several points of discussion, the official added.

"But it was certainly not an emergency meeting called to discuss this (Indo-Pak tension) primarily. It was a discussion of the recent rise in tensions and in ways Pakistan could work constructively to ease those tensions, especially now after the cancellation of meetings between the two sides," the official said.

The goal of the Obama Administration, the official said, is to ensure resumption of dialogue between the two neighbours and "peaceful resolution" to the rising tensions.

"Our overarching goal here is to see a reduction in tension especially in the aftermath of some border skirmishes that has tragically taken the lives on both sides. That's where we have been working towards," the official said.

- PTI