

White House virtually rules out possibility of civil nuclear deal with Pakistan

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Washington: The prospect of a civil nuclear deal with Pakistan being talked about in the public domain is quite unlikely, the White House said on Thursday, but acknowledged that the US is in talks with Islamabad on issues related to nuclear safety and security.

"I know there's been a lot of public speculation about this (a civilian nuclear deal with Pakistan). In asking the same question to a lot of our folks here who are working on this issue, I would not be overly excited about the prospects of reaching the kind of agreement that is being speculated about publicly," White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest told reporters at his daily news conference.

"Pakistan's Prime Minister will be here next week to meet with the President, and I'm wondering if you can confirm for us that the US is, in fact, serious about trying to work out a civilian nuclear deal with Pakistan and whether this is something that will come up in the meeting," he was asked by a White House reporter.

At this point, the US has been engaged with Pakistan as well as the rest of the international community, on issues related to nuclear safety and security, Earnest said.

"We continue to have confidence that the government of Pakistan is well aware of the range of potential threats to its nuclear arsenal, and we continue to be confident that Pakistan has a professional and dedicated security force that understands the importance and the high priority that the world places on nuclear security," he said in response to a question.

"The expectation that we have is that a deal like the one that's been discussed publicly is not something that's likely to come to fruition next week. But the United States and Pakistan are regularly engaged in a dialogue about the importance of nuclear security," Earnest said. "I would anticipate that that dialogue would include conversations between the leaders of our two countries," he said in response to another question.

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