Pressure Pakistan to end support for terrorist groups: US expert

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Washington: As the US again voiced its expectation that Pakistan would thoroughly probe the terrorist attack on an Indian Air Force base, an expert asked Washington to unequivocally pressure Pakistan to end support for terrorist groups.

The US was committed to peace between India and Pakistan and wanted them to continue talks to resolve issues between them bilaterally despite the attack on the Pathankot base, US State Department Spokesperson John Kirby told reporters Monday.

"We're committed to that end (peace), to that goal, and we have been for a long time," he said. "These are tough issues, and these are some very complicated relationships."

Secretary of State John Kerry had called Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Saturday, Kirby said. "They talked a lot about this issue of the pressing need to stay focused on terrorism not just in Pakistan but in the region."

Kerry, he said, also "stressed that it's obviously United States' interest that India and Pakistan continue to look for ways to work better work better together on terrorism concerns but to reduce the tensions between the two countries."

Asked if Kerry had told Sharif that scheduled foreign secretary level talks between India and Pakistan should continue despite the attack, Kirby said they had talked about it.

"He certainly, as I said, encouraged India and Pakistan to work bilaterally to continue discussions and to try to work through these problems."

"Yes, this was a topic of discussion," he said. "It's one we're having at multiple levels here, as you might imagine, at the State Department diplomatically, not just at the Secretary's level."

Asked if Kerry had any feedback about the state of investigation by Pakistan, Kerry repeated that the US was "encouraged by the fact that the Pakistani Government condemned the attack and said that they would investigate."

"Our expectation is that investigation will be thorough and complete and as transparent as possible," he said. "But in terms of its progress and where they are, you'd have to talk to Pakistani authorities on it.

Meanwhile, Alyssa Ayres, a senior fellow for India, Pakistan, and South Asia at the Council on Foreign Relations said in a commentary the US does not play a role in India-Pakistan bilateral talks. "But Washington can certainly take steps to help prevent spoilers from once again disrupting a dialogue process that deserves every chance to succeed," she wrote.

"The single most useful thing the United States can do is to unequivocally pressure Pakistan to end support for terrorist groups - not just some, but all - that destabilize India and the region," Ayres wrote.

- IANS