

Barack Obama to veto bill that allows 9-11 victims to sue Saudi: WH

13/09/2016 19:03 by admin

Washington: US President Barack Obama is set to veto a bill that will allow survivors and families of victims of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks to sue Saudi Arabia.

Barack Obama

"The President does intend to veto this legislation," White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said here on Monday.

According to the White House, the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act was approved unanimously in the House last week, four months after Senate cleared it.

The legislation is strongly opposed by Saudi Arabia which is home to 15 of the 19 hijackers in the September 11, 2001 terror attacks.

Earnest said currently, there is a process inside the executive branch of the US government for designating certain countries as state sponsors of terrorism.

There are a couple of countries that fit that category. That is a very serious designation. It submits those countries to a whole list of limitations and restrictions that isolate them not just from the US, but in many cases, the rest of the world, he said.

There is an evidentially threshold that has to be met before reaching that kind of legislation but that designation, when it is reached, is something that is made public.

"The impact of this legislation could set up a situation where you have judges at a variety of levels, in a variety of courtrooms across the country, making a similar designation," Earnest said.

"You could have judges at different levels in different courtrooms, reaching different conclusions about the same country. That is not an effective, forceful way for us to respond to terrorism. A forceful way for us to respond to terrorism is to thoroughly investigate what role individual countries may have in supporting terrorism, and if we find compelling evidence that they are, to label them accordingly and to act accordingly. And that is what the President believes is the most forceful way for us to confront state sponsors of terrorism," Earnest said.

"The other concern that we have also articulated is that this law actually opens up the US to risk being hauled into court in countries around the world. The concept of sovereign immunity is one that protects the United States as much as any other country in the world, given the way the US is engaged in the world," Earnest said.

It is not hard to imagine other countries using this law as an excuse to haul US diplomats or US service members or even US companies into courts all around the world, Earnest said.

"So the President feels quite strongly about this. Our concern is not limited to the impact it could have on a relationship with one country, but rather it could have an impact on our relationship with every country around the world in a way that has negative consequences for the US, for our national security, and for our men and women in uniform. The President feels strongly about this, and I do anticipate that the President will veto the legislation when it's presented to him. It has not been presented to him yet," Earnest added.

- With PTI Inputs