Pakistan, Afghanistan need to work together to tackle Taliban: White House

Pakistan and Afghanistan need to work together to effectively overcome the Taliban challenge, the White House said, a day after the militant group massacred 21 people, mostly students, at a popular Pakistani university.

“The conclusion that we’ve drawn here is…that the Taliban poses a security threat to both countries, and that the nations of Afghanistan and Pakistan are going to be able to more effectively confront that threat if they’re able to more effectively cooperate,” White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest told reporters yesterday.

Earnest said the US has long been supportive of the reconciliation process between the Afghan government and the Taliban. He said the US is hoping to facilitate better co-operation between the two South Asian neighbours.

As part of that role, US Vice President Joe Biden held a tri-lateral meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Davos yesterday to discuss the recent reconciliation efforts.

During the meeting, Biden reaffirmed US support for reconciliation and improved bilateral ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan. “Any sort of decisions about how the continuation of those talks and any sort of agreement that could be produced by those talks about whether or not that’s in the interest of those countries to pursue – those are decisions that will be made by the leaders in those two countries, as it should be,” he said.

But the US will continue to play the role that it has played for some time now in supporting reconciliation talks that are led by those individual countries, he added.

Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the US have called on all Afghan Taliban groups to start talks with Kabul to find a political solution to the long-running conflict in the war-torn country.

On Wednesday, heavily-armed Taliban militants stormed the Bacha Khan University, named after the iconic Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, in Pakistan’s Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and opened fire on students and teachers, killing 21 people.