

US reports slight progress on Iran tensions



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WASHINGTON, May 22: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday there has been “slight progress” in discussions on Iran and the Strait of Hormuz, while stressing that core concerns remain unresolved.

Speaking ahead of a NATO foreign ministers’ meeting alongside NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, Rubio said there had been limited movement but cautioned against overstatement, adding that fundamentals remain unchanged.

He reiterated Washington's position that Iran must not acquire nuclear weapons and said key issues, including uranium enrichment levels and Tehran's highly enriched uranium stockpile, still require resolution.

Rubio also alleged Iran is seeking to establish a "tolling system" in the Strait of Hormuz and claimed Tehran has involved regional partners. He said the idea is unacceptable and warned it could set a precedent in other waterways.

The US official said talks are ongoing through the United Nations on a Bahrain-sponsored resolution, claiming wide support while criticizing potential veto threats from unnamed Security Council members.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte stressed freedom of navigation, defense spending, and support for Ukraine, noting allies' concerns over maritime security.

Rubio said the US prefers a diplomatic agreement with Iran but insisted a "plan B" is necessary if talks fail.

He highlighted coordination with Pakistan's military leadership, referring to Field Marshal Asim Munir's engagement in regional consultations on Iran-US discussions, according to security sources.

Rubio added that while some progress has been made, more work is required, expressing cautious

optimism about future talks.