Why 'needless strikes', sanctions working perfect for Iran: Rubio

WASHINGTON

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said that economic pressure on Iran had become so severe that President Donald Trump saw no immediate need for major combat operations, while warning that Washington remained ready to respond militarily if Tehran escalated.

Rubio told reporters after a G-7 meeting that the combination of a blockade and sanctions was squeezing Iran's oil earnings. He rejected suggestions that the absence of new major strikes amounted to a stalemate, arguing that the economic damage would deepen over time.

"What I'm saying to you is that the economic campaign is so devastating that right now there really is no need for major combat operations."

Rubio said he had conveyed that assessment to US partners. Discussions at the meeting focused principally on the Middle East and Ukraine, with representatives from Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Egypt and South Korea also participating.

Asked about the possibility of Iranian attacks on civilian infrastructure, he warned: "I mean, if they -- if they do that, then they'll pay a terrible price."

Rubio said Iran was approaching the exhaustion of oil supplies already at sea. Those shipments, he said, had passed through during a temporary ceasefire arrangement when the blockade was suspended. "Once that dries up, almost all of their oil revenue will dry up."

He said Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US intelligence agencies were working to close routes used to evade sanctions. Reduced income, he argued, would constrain Iran's ability to finance its nuclear programme, armed partners and other activities.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio

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The transcript provided no independent figures to substantiate his assessment of the economic damage.

Rubio maintained that Washington remained open to negotiations. Qatar and other countries were continuing mediation efforts, he said, adding that the Qatari prime minister had met Trump in Washington the previous day.

But he described Iran's negotiating conditions as unrealistic. He said Washington would reject demands for reparations and cash payments, while maintaining that Iran could have a civilian nuclear energy programme like other countries. "You know, if there's a deal to be done, it -- the President will be the first one to be in favour of it, but it's not going to be a stupid deal."

Challenged about the economic consequences for Gulf countries, Rubio disputed the suggestion that their economies were being devastated. He said oil shipments were continuing despite Iranian drone attacks on commercial vessels.

On some nights, he said, flows were reaching 80 to 85 per cent of pre-conflict levels. He attributed the remaining shortfall to the interruption of Iranian exports.

Rubio urged other countries to help protect shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. He acknowledged that he had received no response when he raised the issue with G7 counterparts, though he said such commitments would probably require decisions by heads of government.

He also rejected linking Lebanon's future to negotiations with Tehran. Washington was mediating directly between Lebanon and Israel, he said, and was working on a system to verify compliance with arrangements involving Israeli withdrawals and deployments by the Lebanese armed forces.

India emerges as a key player in Russia-Ukraine peace talks

PM Modi said India ready to contribute 'in every possible way' towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict

NEW DELHI

INDIA is seen as a credible country that can help in the peace talks between Russia and Ukraine because it is one of few major powers with working relationships with both countries, according to a report in Al Jazeera.

It cited a foreign affairs expert as saying that India's strategic autonomy puts it in a position to push for peace because New Delhi is "friends with both" sides.

India has also been even-handed. In July, it summoned Moscow's charge d'affaires to condemn a Russian strike on a merchant vessel that killed 10 people, including four Indian crew members. Days later, it summoned Ukraine's ambassador over an Indian seafarer killed in a Ukrainian drone strike on the MV Omorfi, the report observes.

It highlights that India is also an importer of goods from both Russia and Ukraine. In the 2025-26, India imported 1.46 million tonnes of sunflower oil from Russia and 443,000 tonnes from Ukraine, according to the Indian Solvent Extractors' Association (SEA), alongside large volumes of Russian crude.

The article cites Maximilian Hess, a fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, as saying that Zelenskyy approached India "because they have leverage over Moscow, and they are still one of the few major buyers of its oil."

He added that a large amount of Russian money sits in the Indian financial system, which Moscow wants to keep access to.

Before Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, about a third of the world's grain exports passed through the Black Sea, with Ukraine supplying a tenth of global wheat exports and 15 percent of maize. Disruption hits food-importing countries hardest, particularly in Africa and parts of Asia, the report states.


Members of the Ukrainian, US and Russian peace talks delegations meet in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday

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Indian officials point out that India as a leading voice of the Global South is keen that food exports to these developing nations resume to prevent adequate supplies and controlling rising inflation.

Both Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have discussed the issue of opening the food corridor over a phone call. "India is ready to mediate in establishing food corridors, and we are counting on these efforts to continue," Zelenskyy posted on X after call. The leaders discussed Russia's blocking of grain exports in the Black Sea, he said.

PM Modi said India was ready to contribute "in every possible way" towards a peaceful resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, during a visit to Kyiv in September, spoke of a potential pause on strikes against Black Sea shipping and energy infrastructure. On October 4, he said India was talking to both Russia and Ukraine about shipping safety, grain and energy exports and "non-attack possibilities".

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha earlier called India's proposal "the broadest", because it covers both the Black Sea and energy infrastructure. The US plan offers only a halt to strikes on energy facilities. Meanwhile, delegations from Moscow and Kyiv on Wednesday held a second straight day of US-brokered talks on ways of ending the war started by Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine nearly five years ago.

Hopes are low for any breakthrough in the first meeting in nine months between the delegations, although US officials say they are determined to revive peace efforts that so far have failed to deliver significant results. "We are starting the second day of negotiations," Rustem Umerov, the head of Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service who leads Kyiv's delegation in Abu Dhabi, said on social media.

The envoys met for four hours Tuesday in the capital of the United Arab Emirates, which was chosen as a neutral venue. The talks, mediated by US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff, were due to conclude later Wednesday.

The context of the negotiations has changed since the last meeting in February in Geneva. The Trump administration has to reckon with Democrats, who could demand more support for Ukraine, taking over the US Congress in January following the US midterm elections.

Also, Russia's wartime economy is under heavy strain, and Ukraine is reeling from devastating aerial attacks on its power grid.

Umerov said that Wednesday would begin with three-way talks involving Russia, Ukraine and the United States, with Kyiv's delegation meeting afterwards with European officials.

Moscow doesn't want European countries, which are concerned about Russia's conduct and broader intentions on the continent, involved in the direct negotiations. However, representatives of European governments, the European Union and NATO were in Abu Dhabi and were consulting with the Ukrainian delegation, officials said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday's session was "constructive and quite substantive".

Nvidia CEO Jensen's affair with Chinese woman likely to cause collateral damage

WASHINGTON

EXTRAMARITAL affairs are usually private matters. Jensen Huang's has global implications. The 63-year-old is the leading face of the artificial intelligence revolution with his black leather jackets and fluff of grey hair. He runs the company Nvidia, which produces highly coveted computer chips. That's landed him on a late-night-phone-call basis with President Donald Trump, a promoter of the industry.

But Huang was also liaising with a Chinese businesswoman who has allegedly fed intelligence - as well as advanced chips - to China. The woman, Alice Huang, is a former executive at the Singapore-based cloud computing company Megaspeed.

It's a saga of personal betrayal, corporate espionage and high-tech development, and the fallout is spreading across Washington. There are bipartisan calls for investigations on Capitol Hill. The US Department of Justice has opened its own probe. Nvidia, one of the most valuable companies in the world, is conducting an internal review.

Some expect the technology to reshape human civilisation by imbuing computers with the vast powers of creation and analysis, and Trump has repeated that "whoever wins AI, wins." Nvidia is the backbone of America's plans for dominating the field.

When asked about Huang's affair, Trump said this week that he had spoken to the tech executive as the scandal grew. "I think he'll be in good shape," Trump said, adding that "he said he had absolutely no idea that the person in question was a spy."


Jensen Huang, CEO, Nvidia

As for when the president first learned about the concerns involving Alice Huang, Trump brushed off the question. "They could have been mentioned," he said. "Certainly it didn't make much of an impact on me."

Authorities are investigating Megaspeed and Alice Huang

With the AI race between the US and China often framed as a fierce and consequential rivalry, the Justice Department has persistently warned of the espionage threat posed by Beijing.

That includes efforts to cultivate well-placed relationships in government and private industry, as well as to acquire sensitive technology such as AI chips developed in the US.

Last year, Megaspeed faced scrutiny from the US Commerce Department over its alleged skirting of US export laws and routing of a large amount of advanced Nvidia chips to Chinese users. The company denied those allegations. US intelligence officials eventually concluded that Alice Huang had spied for China, according to The New York Times.

Over 31K oppose Trump govt's removal of H-1B grace period

WASHINGTON

A Trump administration proposal to eliminate the 60-day grace period that allows laid-off H-1B visa holders to find new jobs in the United States has drawn more than 31,000 public comments, as the deadline for submissions approached.

The proposal, which could have major consequences for Indian professionals working in America, had received 31,383 posted comments by Tuesday night (local time).

The number had risen from about 27,000 on November 2 to 30,382 early Tuesday, reflecting growing public engagement with one of the administration's latest immigration proposals.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published the proposed rule on September 11. It seeks to remove a regulation allowing certain foreign workers up to 60 days after losing their jobs to secure new employment, change immigration status or prepare to leave the country.

The provision covers H-1B workers and several other temporary visa categories, including L-1, O-1 and TN. Their dependants are also covered. Under existing rules, eligible workers can remain for up to 60 days after employment ends, or until their authorised stay expires, whichever comes first.

If the proposal takes effect, workers who lose their jobs would no longer receive this discretionary protection. They would generally have to leave the United States unless otherwise authorised to remain. DHS argues that immigration status should remain directly linked to the employment for which a foreign worker was admitted. The department said the existing grace period "is not mandated by statute" and creates additional administrative work.



According to DHS, immigration officials had to consider whether the provision applied in more than 1.9 million petitions and applications between October 2017 and May 2026.

Using revoked employment petitions as a measure, the department estimated that an average of 65,752 foreign workers annually lost or changed jobs between fiscal 2021 and 2025. Of those, about 3,795 had new employer petitions filed within the grace period each year. DHS acknowledged that eliminating the provision could cause some workers to lose income, incur relocation expenses or face immigration proceedings. The proposal carries particular significance for Indians, who account for the largest share of H-1B beneficiaries.

According to USCIS figures cited in its fiscal 2025 report to Congress, about 70 per cent of 406,348 approved H-1B petitions involved beneficiaries born in India. China accounted for approximately 12 per cent.

The grace-period proposal has attracted more posted comments than two other pending DHS measures affecting international students and skilled foreign workers.

A separate proposal to charge institutions $70,000 for initial Optional Practical Training and $30,000 for subsequent training had received 8,947 posted comments by Tuesday night. Its comment period ended on Monday.

Another proposal would remove the practice of generally deferring to previous USCIS approvals when reviewing extension applications involving unchanged circumstances. That measure had received 686 posted comments. Its deadline is November 13.

The volume of comments does not by itself establish how many respondents support or oppose the proposals.

DHS must review the submissions before deciding whether to issue a final rule. Any final regulation would specify when the changes take effect. The 60-day grace period was established through a 2016 regulation that took effect on January 17, 2017.

The H-1B programme permits American employers to recruit foreign professionals for specialised occupations, particularly in technology, engineering and other skilled fields.

Indian among 4 seafarers injured as projectile hits Liberian ship

NEW DELHI

UNION Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal on Wednesday said that a Liberia-flagged very large crude carrier (VLCC) MT Fujairah Energy was struck by a projectile while transiting the Persian Gulf, leaving four crew members injured, including one Indian national.

In a post on X, Sonowal said that the vessel was carrying six Indian seafarers when it came under attack on Tuesday. He added that the injured Indian seafarer had suffered minor injuries and was safely taken ashore for further medical examination, while the remaining 18 crew members, including the other five Indian seafarers, were safe.

"On Nov 10, Liberia-flagged VLCC MT Fujairah Energy, carrying 6 Indian seafarers, was hit by a projectile while transiting the Persian Gulf from Al Ruwais to Dubai. Four crew members sustained injuries in the attack, including one Indian national, who suffered minor injuries and has been safely taken ashore for further medical examination. The remaining 18 crew members, including the other 5 Indian seafarers, are safe and accounted for," the Union Minister stated.


The incident involving the very large crude carrier (VLCC) MT Fujairah Energy took place on Tuesday, when the vessel was sailing from Al Ruwais to Dubai with six Indian seafarers on board. Representational pic

"We are continuously monitoring the situation and remain in close contact with the ship management company to ensure the ongoing security, medical care and wellbeing of our seafarers," he added.

Last week, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that as many as 23 Indian nationals, including 15 Indian seafarers, lost their lives in the ongoing conflict in West Asia, while five Indian nationals died in attacks on commercial shipping in the Black Sea region.

Addressing a bi-weekly media briefing in New Delhi, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that one Indian national died after a ship that carried 14 Indian crew members came under attack. He thanked Omani authorities for rescuing 13 Indian nationals when the ship was attacked on November 2.

On the number of Indian nationals who lost their lives in the West Asia conflict, Jaiswal said, "In so far as the number of people who have died, Indian nationals who have died, last time I told you there were 22 Indian nationals whom we have lost in the conflict in West Asia. Out of those 22 Indian nationals, we have 14 Indian seafarers, and today we have lost one more, yesterday, that is, which means there are 23 Indian nationals which we have lost in the conflict in West Asia. Out of these, 15 of them are Indian seafarers."

Immigration arrests continue despite Trump's claims for his midterm loss

WASHINGTON

IT's business as usual for President Donald Trump's deportation offensive despite the Republican wipeout in the midterm elections.

In Los Angeles, masked immigration officers in body armor blocked a hospital emergency room driveway in a heavily Latino neighborhood early Saturday. In central Alabama, twin 19-year-old brothers from Venezuela were arrested while driving back to college a day after the election.



Advocates reported arrests from California to Michigan to Massachusetts.

After Democrats trounced the GOP and won control of the next Congress, Trump said his immigration crackdown may have been "too tough" and suggested it was time to sit down with the rival party. "I'd love to do something on immigration," he said in an interview with CBS "60 Minutes" recorded Friday.

Hours later, he named Stephen Miller, the architect of his hardline immigration agenda, as his new chief of staff. Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin, meanwhile, said his orders had not changed.