Iran, US play down hopes for imminent breakthrough in war

BY REUTERS

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD. Iran and the United States yesterday played down hopes for an imminent breakthrough in the three-month-old war, with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio saying there will either be a good agreement or Washington would deal with the country in "another way".

Mr Rubio told reporters in New Delhi that the US would give diplomacy every chance to "alternatives", after President Donald Trump said on Sunday he had told his representatives not to rush into any Iran deal.

There was a "pretty solid thing on the table in terms of their ability to open up the Strait, get the Strait open, enter into a very real, significant, time-limited negotiation on the nuclear matter, and hopefully we can pull it off," he said.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei yesterday said Iran was negotiating an end to the war and was not currently discussing nuclear issues.

The spokesperson added that a framework had been reached, but no one could say an agreement between the United States and Iran was imminent.

The potential memorandum of understanding contained no specific details about the management of the Strait of Hormuz, which belongs to the coastal countries, he said.

A day earlier, President Trump wrote on Truth Social that the US blockade on Iranian ships in the Strait of Hormuz would "remain in full force and effect until an agreement is reached, certified, and signed".

Oil prices yesterday fell five percent to two-week lows, as optimism grew that the US and Iran were moving closer to a peace deal.

Mr Trump raised expectations of an imminent deal on Saturday when he said Washington and Tehran had "largely negotiated" a memorandum of understanding on a peace agreement that would reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson yesterday said Iran would not take tolls for passage through the vital waterway, but added that it was "normal for services provided to require a price".

The two sides remain at odds on several difficult issues, such as Iran's nuclear ambitions, Israel's war in Lebanon with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militia.

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