

US lauds India's engagement on trade, energy and pharma

CRUCIAL TALKS. Rubio-Jaishankar meet was key amid concerns over tariffs, H-1B fees

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India is a relationship of critical importance to the US and the country's continued engagement on a number of issues including trade, defence and energy is to be appreciated, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said.

A statement issued by the US State Department, following Rubio's meeting with Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar on Monday, however, did not cite any assurance on issues of concern to India such as US penal tariffs on Indian goods, sanctions on Chabahar Port investments and steep hike in H-1B visa fee.

"Secretary Rubio, reiterating that India is a relationship of critical importance to the US, expressed his appreciation for the Indian government's continued engagement on a number of issues including trade, defence, energy, pharmaceuticals, critical minerals and other items related to the bi-



STRATEGIC MOMENT. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in New York

lateral relationship," the US statement noted.

The timing of Rubio's meeting with Jaishankar, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly high-level week, was significant for India as it is keen on ironing out a number of issues with the US that have cropped up recently hurting its interests.

Last month, the US imposed 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods, which includes a 25 per cent penalty for buy-

ing oil from Russia.

Jaishankar, in a social media post on X on Monday, stated that his conversation with Rubio covered a range of bilateral and international issues of current concern. "Agreed on the importance of sustained engagement to progress on priority areas. We will remain in touch," he said. The US also decided to withdraw the exemption given to Iran applying to investments in Chabahar port from September 29, which

could lead to India's investments in the port taking a big hit.

H-1B VISA FEE

Moreover, US President's recent decision to impose a \$100,000 fee on H1-B visas for skilled foreign workers is set to affect Indian IT firms doing business in the country, given the ongoing turbulence in bilateral relations, especially on the economic front.

Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is also in the US to meet his American counterparts to take forward the trade talks that have been facing glitches due to imposition of high tariffs on India and other issues such as US demand for market access in sensitive agriculture and dairy products.

"Secretary Rubio and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar agreed the US and India will continue working together to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region, including through the Quad," the statement added.