

## The Prospects of US-Iran Direct Talks

### Why in news?

European-brokered efforts to revive the Iran nuclear deal are likely to resume following US President Joe Biden's visit to the region.

### What is the history behind the Iran Nuclear Deal?

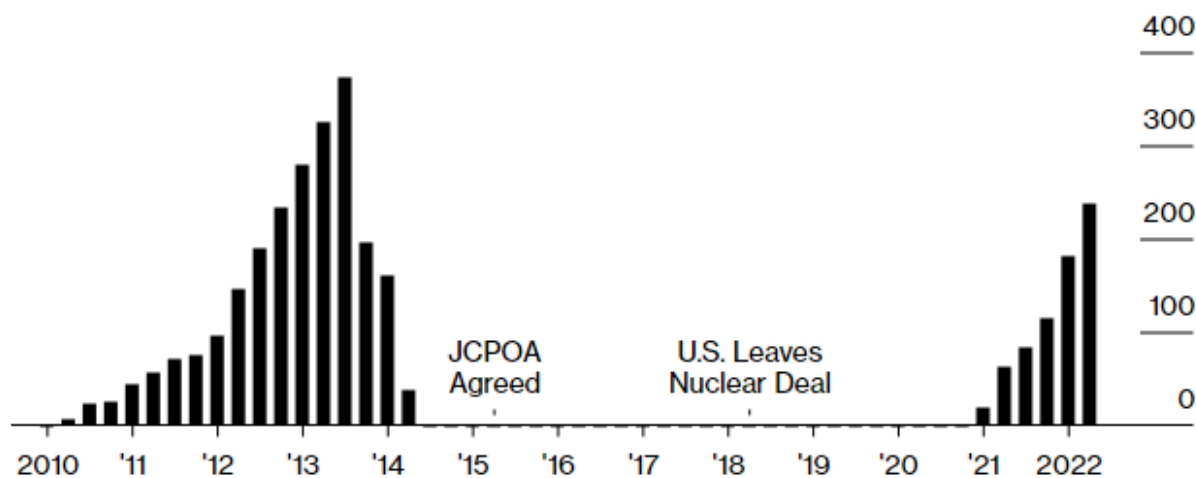
- Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA or Iran nuclear deal) is the result of prolonged negotiations between Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, UK, USA and EU) nations.
- It was quietly brokered by Oman in an attempt to repair its mistrust with Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution.
- The deal obliged Iran to limit its uranium enrichment programme which will be verified by an intrusive inspection regime.
- In return, US agreed to partially lift its economic sanctions on Iran.
- However this was not ratified in US Senate and was implemented through periodic executive orders to keep sanction waivers going.
- Later, Trump administration pulled out from the deal in May 2018 and exerted maximum pressure on Iran to renegotiate through its sanctions.

### What happened aftermath the withdrawal of the U.S. from JCPOA?

- **Irans' response**- It began to move away from JCPOA's constraints incrementally- exceeding the ceilings of enriching uranium, stepping up R&D on advanced centrifuges etc.
- After the US strike on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander, Iran said that it would not commit to JCPOA's restraints but it will maintain cooperation with IAEA.
- **USA's side**- U.S. pushed ahead with its unilateral sanctions by widening the scope.
- By end-2020, U.S. had imposed nearly 80 rounds of sanctions targeting close to 1,500 individuals and entities in Iran.
- **Vienna talks**- The aim of the talks is to produce a road map for the revival of the JCPOA by addressing two critical issues — Iran's nuclear enhanced programme and American sanctions.
- The U.S. wants Iran to end its uranium enrichment and centrifuge development programmes and return to the 2015 agreement.
- Iran has rejected the offer now seeking more concrete measures from the U.S.
- The talks collapsed earlier this year as the Biden administration refused to remove the terrorist designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a critical arm of Iran's armed forces.
- **Doha talks**- The recent indirect talks between US and Iranian officials in Doha, Qatar, aimed at salvaging the Iran nuclear deal ended without any progress.

## Iran's 20% Enriched Uranium Stockpile

Volume of material has steadily climbed since U.S. left JCPOA



Source: IAEA data compiled by Bloomberg

## What is the way forward?

- Mr. Biden is facing pressure from America's allies in West Asia, especially Israel, to include Iran's weapons programme in the ambit of a fresh agreement.
- Iran is strongly resisting any attempt to expand the scope of the agreement.
- As negotiations go on, Israel has stepped up its shadow war with the Islamic Republic, targeting its military and nuclear personnel and weapons facilities.
- A key meeting of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty members convenes next month in New York.
- Iran has threatened to leave that bedrock bargain which limits the spread of nuclear weapons, in return for access to atomic technologies.
- The U.S. and Iran should start direct negotiations to overcome differences and find common ground on the deal.

## References

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