GS-II: Seize the opening.

Context

The spokesperson for Iran’s nuclear agency announced that the country had the ability to enrich uranium up to 20% and it had launched advanced centrifuge machines.

Implications

This further violates its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

It is also an escalation of the brinkmanship since US President Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018.

JCPOA

- The 2015 JCPOA came into being after arduous negotiations.
- It placed restrictions on Iran’s nuclear programme and removed the harsh economic sanctions on the country.
- Since the US’s withdrawal from the deal, the Trump administration has ramped up the sanctions, and its anti-Iran rhetoric. Iran has flouted the limits placed on its nuclear programme.
- The US assumed that the sanctions would increase disaffection in Iran to such a degree that the government would be overthrown.
- The moderate, democratically-elected Rouhani government has suffered due to the sanctions. The nuclear deal was pushed despite the recalcitrant sections of the Islamic state as opposed to any accord with the US.

Indian role

- India has managed to walk the diplomatic tightrope between the US and Iran.
- India has a very close relationship with the US and also has close historical and trade ties with Iran.
- India could join Paris and other world powers in nudging both countries towards talks.