

Qeshm Island, Iran's Strategic Gateway to the Strait of Hormuz

August 3, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



Qeshm Island has recently been in the news after **U.S. military strikes reportedly targeted Iranian military facilities on the island**, bringing global attention to its strategic location near the Strait of Hormuz and its importance in the ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

Qeshm Island is the **largest island in the Persian Gulf** and occupies a strategically vital position at the entrance of the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's busiest energy corridors. Qeshm Island is **important for its unique geological heritage, rich biodiversity, trade history and growing geopolitical significance**.

About Qeshm Island

Qeshm Island is a **strategically important territory of Iran, located near the Strait of Hormuz**.

- It is situated off the southern coast of Iran in **Hormozgan Province**, separated from the mainland by the **Clarence Strait (Khuran Channel)**.
- Covering **about 1,491 sq. km**, it is the **largest island in both the Persian Gulf and West Asia**.

- The island has been an **important maritime centre** since ancient times due to its location on historic trade routes connecting Persia, Arabia and the **Indian Ocean**.
- In **1622**, the **Safavid Empire**, with assistance from the English East India Company, expelled the Portuguese and restored the island to Persian (Iranian) control, where it has remained ever since.
- In **1991**, Iran declared Qeshm a **Free Trade Zone (FTZ)** to promote trade, industry, tourism and investment.
- The island hosts important ports, fisheries, shipping facilities and commercial infrastructure alongside military installations.
- It is **administered by Iran** but also serves as a key operational area for the **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy**.
- The island's strategic position enables Iran to monitor and influence maritime movement through the Strait of Hormuz.

Conflict Related to Qeshm Island

Qeshm Island has become an important centre of regional tensions because of its location near the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's busiest oil shipping routes. As relations between Iran, the United States and Israel have become more strained, the island has gained greater military importance. Recently, reports of U.S. strikes on Iranian military facilities on Qeshm Island brought it into international focus. Any conflict around the island could disrupt oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, increase global oil prices and affect peace and stability in West Asia.

Qeshm Island Geographical Features

Qeshm Island possesses diverse geological and ecological features that make it environmentally significant.

- It lies in the Persian Gulf near the narrow entrance of the Strait of Hormuz.
- The island has an **arid climate with rugged hills, limestone formations, coastal plains and mangrove ecosystems**.
- It is home to the **Hara Mangrove Forests**, one of the largest mangrove ecosystems in the Persian Gulf.
- The island contains several unique geological formations, including **valleys, caves, salt domes and canyons** shaped by erosion.
- The **Qeshm Island UNESCO Global Geopark**, designated in 2006 and revalidated periodically, is the **first UNESCO Global Geopark in the Middle East**, recognised for its exceptional geological heritage and geodiversity.
- Rich marine biodiversity supports fisheries, migratory birds, dolphins, turtles and coral ecosystems.

Qeshm Island Strategic Significance

Qeshm Island occupies a central place in Iran's security, economic and maritime strategy.

- **Controls access to the Strait of Hormuz**, one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints for oil and LNG trade.

- **Strengthens Iran's maritime defence** by hosting IRGC naval assets, coastal missile batteries, drones and surveillance systems.
- **Supports Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy**, enabling Iran to deter hostile naval operations.
- **Enhances maritime domain awareness** through radar, intelligence and coastal monitoring infrastructure.
- **Acts as a logistics and operational hub** for Iranian naval and coast guard activities.
- **Supports Iran's economy** through its Free Trade Zone, ports, fisheries and tourism.
- **Provides strategic depth during periods of regional conflict** by integrating military, commercial and civilian infrastructure.

Why Does Qeshm Island Matter for India?

Qeshm Island is strategically important for India's energy security, trade and regional interests.

- **Nearly 20% of global crude oil trade passes through the nearby Strait of Hormuz**, making uninterrupted maritime navigation vital for India.
- India imports a significant share of its crude oil and LNG from the West Asian region, much of which transits through this route.
- Any disruption around Qeshm could increase energy prices, freight costs and supply-chain risks.
- Stability in the Persian Gulf is essential for safeguarding the interests of the Indian diaspora working across Gulf countries.
- The **island's proximity to India's western maritime** approaches underscores the importance of maritime security cooperation and freedom of navigation.
- Developments around Qeshm have implications for India's broader engagement with West Asia under the Link West Policy and its objective of ensuring secure sea lanes in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/qeshm-island/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.