Kharg Island

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Why in News?

US President Donald Trump said American forces carried out strikes on military targets on Kharg Island, warning that oil infrastructure on the island could also be targeted if Iran disrupts shipping in the region.

- **Location** - Kharg Island is a strategic coral island in the ***northern Persian Gulf,*** located near the coast of Iran's Bushehr Province.
- It is known as the "beating heart" of Iran's energy empire.
- It is situated close to the ***Strait of Hormuz***.
- **Historical Significance –** Kharg Island has been inhabited for over 2,000 years and served as an important maritime and trading post.
- Functioned as an outpost under the ***Achaemenid Empire and Sassanid Empire.***
- Archaeologists discovered a 2,400-year-old Old Persian cuneiform inscription on the island in 2007.
- Hosted a Nestorian Christian monastery in the 7th century.
- Dutch East India Company established a trading post in 1753, later expelled by Persian forces in 1766.
- United Kingdom briefly occupied the island during conflicts with the Qajar dynasty in the 19th century.
- During the Iran–Iraq War (1980 – 1988), Kharg Island became a major strategic target.
- **Geography -** Kharg is a ***rocky limestone*** and coral island, roughly 8 km long and 4 km wide.
- It is unique in the Persian Gulf for having its own natural freshwater supply.
- **Forbidden Island -** Due to its extreme military and economic importance, the island is heavily guarded by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and requires special security clearance for entry.

- **Strategic & Economic Significance - Oil Hub –** Kharg Island functions as the primary export terminal and handles about 90% of Iran's crude oil exports.

  Iran is the 9th largest producer of Oil with 10% of global proven oil reserves and 15% of global natural gas reserves.

- Around one-fifth of global petroleum liquids consumption passes through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Any disruption near Kharg Island can significantly affect global energy markets and oil supply.
- **Storage Capacity-** It has a massive storage capacity of approximately 28–30 million barrels of oil.
- **Revenue Hub -** The terminal generates an estimated $78 billion in annual energy revenue, much of which is used to fund the Iranian military.

References

1. Indian Express | Kharg Island
2. The Hindu | Kharg Island

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