



Red Sea

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Why in News

An **Iranian freighter was hit by Israel in the Red Sea** in retaliation for past Iranian strikes on its vessels. The blast struck the **Iranian commercial vessel MV Saviz** off the coast of Djibouti.

The attack came as Iranian officials gathered in Vienna to **negotiate the restoration of a 2015 deal Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** that was designed to curb Iran's nuclear activities.

Key Points

Red Sea:

◦ Location:

- The Red Sea is a **semi-enclosed tropical basin**, bounded by northeastern Africa, to the west, and the **Arabian peninsula**, to the east.
- The **elongated and narrow-shaped basin** extends between the **Mediterranean Sea**, to the north-west, and the Indian Ocean, to the south-east.
- At the northern end, it separates into the **Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez**, which is connected to the Mediterranean Sea via the **Suez Canal**.
- At the southern end, it is connected to the **Gulf of Aden**, and the outer Indian Ocean, via the Strait of **Bab-el-Mandeb**.
- It is surrounded by **desert or semi-desert areas**, with no major freshwater inflow.

◦ Formation:

- The Red sea acquired its present shape over the **past 4 to 5 million years**, by slow **seafloor spreading**, a fact that makes it a geologically recent opening and one of the **youngest oceanic zones on Earth**.
- Today, the basin continues to widen at a rate of 1-2 cm per year

◦ Biodiversity:

- The unique habitats of the Red sea support a wide range of marine life, including **sea turtles, dugongs, dolphins** and many endemic fish species.
- **Coral reefs** mainly extend along the northern and central coasts, and decrease in abundance towards the southern region, as coastal waters become more turbid.

◦ The Reason why it is called Red Sea:

- There are various theories as to how the name came about, with the most popular being a reference to the **seasonal blooms of Trichodesmium erythraeum (a red-colored algae)** near the water's surface.
- Other scholars believe it is linked to the way Asiatic languages often use colors to refer to cardinal directions, with **“red” referring to “south” just as the Black Sea may be referring to the north**.



Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

- In 2015, **Iran with the P5+1 group of world powers - the US, UK, France, China, Russia, and Germany** agreed on a long-term deal on its nuclear programme.
- The deal was named as **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** and in common parlance as Iran Nuclear Deal.
- The deal came after years of tension over Iran's alleged efforts to develop nuclear weapons.
- Iran insisted that its nuclear programme was entirely peaceful, but the international community did not believe that.
- Under the JCPOA, **Iran agreed to limit its nuclear activities** by stopping uranium enrichment and allowing the international agencies to inspect its nuclear facilities in return for the lifting of economic sanctions.

- However, in May 2018, the USA pulled out of the JCPOA and threatened to impose sanctions on Iran and on nations doing a significant amount of trade with Iran.

Source:TH