



## RED SEA & GULF OF ADEN: PLACES IN NEWS

**NEWS:** Threats in Gulf of Aden and Red Sea could increase, cautions Rajnath

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

India's Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, has emphasized the Indian Navy's role in addressing maritime security threats in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and waters near East African nations. The challenges include piracy, militant activities, and Houthi rebel attacks, which jeopardize vital global trade routes.

#### 1. The Red Sea: Strategic Importance and Current Threats

- **Geographical Context:**
  - The Red Sea is a narrow seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean.
  - Length: Approximately **1,200 miles (1,930 km)**; Width: Up to **190 miles (305 km)**.
  - Bordered by **Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea (Africa)** and **Saudi Arabia, Yemen (Asia)**.
- **Strategic Importance:**
  - It serves as a critical waterway connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean via the **Suez Canal**.
  - Heavily trafficked route, facilitating trade between **Europe and Asia**.
- **Environmental Significance:**
  - Unique marine ecosystems due to its depth and tectonic origins as part of a rift valley between the **African and Arabian plates**.
  - Contains some of the **world's hottest and saltiest seawater**.
- **Security Concerns:**
  - Since **November 2023**, Yemen's **Houthi group** has targeted merchant ships in the Red Sea, causing disruptions in trade and security.
  - Over **100 attacks** recorded, leading to the sinking of two vessels and the deaths of at least four seafarers.

#### 2. The Gulf of Aden: A Vital Sea Link

- **Geographical Context:**
  - The Gulf of Aden connects the **Red Sea** to the **Arabian Sea**.



- **Borders:**
  - Northern Coast: **Yemen**.
  - Southern Coast: **Somalia** and **Djibouti**.
- **Strategic Importance:**
  - Serves as a natural corridor for maritime trade between the Mediterranean Sea (via the Suez Canal) and the Indian Ocean.
  - Plays a critical role in global energy transportation and trade.
- **Security Challenges:**
  - **Piracy and militant activities** have long plagued this region, threatening shipping lanes.
  - Recent **Houthi rebel attacks** have added to the instability, posing risks to vessels in this strategic passage.



### 3. East African Countries Bordering the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden



- **Djibouti:**
  - Situated at the southern entrance to the Red Sea, near the **Bab el-Mandeb Strait**, a chokepoint for maritime traffic.
  - Hosts multiple **foreign military bases** (e.g., U.S., China, France) due to its strategic position.
- **Eritrea:**
  - Lies along the southwestern Red Sea coast.
  - Shares borders with **Sudan (northwest)** and **Djibouti (south)**, enhancing its strategic significance.
- **Somalia:**
  - Occupies the **Horn of Africa**, with a long northern coastline along the Gulf of Aden.
  - Key player in regional dynamics due to its location at the junction of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.
- **Ethiopia:**
  - A **landlocked nation** that lost access to the Red Sea after Eritrea's independence.
  - Recent agreements with Somaliland aim to restore Ethiopia's sea access, intensifying regional tensions.

## Key Security Challenges Highlighted by Defence Minister

- **Houthi Attacks:** Increasingly frequent and deadly assaults on merchant ships in the Red Sea.
- **Piracy:** The Gulf of Aden remains a piracy hotspot despite international naval efforts.
- **Chokepoint Vulnerability:** Areas like the **Bab el-Mandeb Strait** and **Suez Canal** are critical yet susceptible to disruptions.

**Source:** <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/threats-in-gulf-of-aden-and-red-sea-could-increase-cautions-rajnath/article69109401.ece>