

BILATERAL BRIEF - Somalia

Historical overview

- India and Somalia relations are age old, with strong connect established by traders who sailed through the Indian ocean to buy and sell goods in the Horn of Africa. The connection still continues with presence of Indian business community in Somalia.
- The diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1960, a year after Somalia's independence. The High Commissioner of India to Mauritius was accredited as Ambassador of India to Somalia. Later, a resident Mission was opened in Mogadishu.
- Early high-level exchanges laid the foundation of India–Somalia relations, with leadership-level visits taking place soon after Somalia's independence, reflecting the close political understanding between the two countries. Prime Minister of Somalia Dr. Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke visited India in 1963. Dr. Sharmarke visited India again in 1968 as President of Somalia.
- After the outbreak of civil war in 1991, the Indian Embassy in Mogadishu was closed down. High Commission of India, Nairobi is concurrently accredited to Somalia.

High Level Visits

- There have been regular high-level engagements between India and Somalia, reflecting continued political interaction and cooperation across multilateral and bilateral platforms.
- In recent years, Ministerial and senior-level engagements have been sustained: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Foreign Ministers of Somalia on the sidelines of the UNGA High-Level Week in September 2024 and September 2025; Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh met State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Mohamed Omar in October 2025 on the sidelines of the NAM Ministerial Meeting; State Minister for Energy and Water Resources Mohamed Abdullahi Farah participated in the ISA Assembly in October 2025 and earlier in November 2024, and in the Voice of Global South Summit in August 2024; Minister for Energy and Water Resources Abdilahi Bidhan visited India in September 2024 for India Water Week; State Minister for Communications and Technology Ahmed Osman Dirie visited India in October 2024 for WTSA; State Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdisalam Sharif Hussein visited India in August 2024 for the CII India-Africa Business Conclave; Deputy Minister of Health Mohamed Hassan Bullale visited India in

August 2023 for Advantage Healthcare India; Minister of Health Ali Haji Adam Abubakar participated in the Voice of Global South Summit in November 2023 and Advantage Healthcare India in April 2023.

- Earlier high-level visits include President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud attending the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit in October 2015; Deputy Prime Minister Mahdi Mohammed Gulaid visiting India in March 2018 for the founding conference of the International Solar Alliance; Minister of Foreign Affairs Yusuf Garaad Omar visiting India in July–August 2017; Defence Minister Hassan Ali Mohamed Amardambe attending DefExpo India in 2020; External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar meeting Somali Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre in November 2019; and Minister of State for External Affairs V. K. Singh visiting Somalia in July 2015 as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister.

Bilateral Trade

- Somalia, being an LDC country, qualifies for India’s offer of unilateral Duty-Free Tariff Preferential (DFTP) market access for export of goods and services to India. India is one of Somalia’s top trading partners with the trade relations encompassing various sectors of the economy. The value of trade in FY 2024-25 stood at US\$ 800.86 million. Of this, the value of Indian exports to Somalia was US\$ 765.66 million while that of imports from Somalia to India was US\$ 35.20 million. Main Indian exports to Somalia in the period includes cereals, sugars & confectionery, vehicles & parts, clothing & articles, electrical machinery & equipment, ceramic products, machinery and plastics. Main Somalian exports to India on the other hand were iron & steel, oil seeds & fruits, electrical machinery & equipment, aluminium & articles, petroluem products, lead & articles and raw hides & skins. The following table summarizes the bilateral trade figures.

Year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
EXPORT	946.37	819.58	765.66
%Growth	27.10	-13.40	-6.58
% Share of India’s Export	0.2098	0.1875	0.1750
IMPORT	17.90	28.21	35.20
%Growth	-0.93	57.61	24.81
%Share of India’s Import	0.0025	0.0042	0.0049
TOTAL TRADE	964.27	847.79	800.86

%Growth	26.44	-12.08	-5.54
TRADE BALANCE	928.47	791.37	730.46

Development Cooperation and assistance

- India has been a consistent partner in Somalia’s development journey, providing humanitarian assistance, capacity building and institutional support over several decades.
- India’s assistance dates back to early engagements, including supply of 100,000 tonnes of wheat to countries in the region, including Somalia, in 1985, and relief assistance comprising medicines and food worth Rs. 20 lakh during the visit of Minister of State for External Affairs Eduardo Faleiro in 1992. In August 2010, Somalia became a partner country in the Pan-African e-Network project, inaugurated by External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna. In September 2011, India announced humanitarian assistance of US\$ 8 million for countries in the Horn of Africa region, including Somalia, through the World Food Programme. Following the announcement by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh at the 2nd India-Africa Forum Summit in May 2011, India contributed US\$ 2 million to AMISOM, and subsequently extended additional support of US\$ 1 million each in 2012, 2017 and 2021 to the United Nations Trust Fund for AMISOM.
- India has also supported Somalia through capacity building and training initiatives. A special training programme for 20 Somali diplomats was conducted at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service in September–October 2015, followed by a second course from May–June 2018, alongside the signing of an MoU between the Foreign Service Institute and Somalia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2018. In July 2018, India handed over essential medicines worth US\$ 1 million to Somalia’s Ministry of Health. India further supported Somalia with the gift of 27 mini-buses in February 2021. In September 2025, India donated 10 tonnes of medical aid, including essential medicines, surgical supplies and hospital equipment. Capacity building cooperation has continued to expand, with Somalia allocated 15 slots annually under ICCR and ITEC programmes, increased to 30 ITEC slots in 2025, along with participation under IAFS-III scholarships and the e-ITEC platform. Over the past decade, Somalia has utilized over 200 training slots. Somalia is also a partner country under the e-VidyaBharti and e-ArogyaBharti (e-VBAB) Network project, the successor to the Pan-African e-Network. A special course for foreign diplomats was conducted at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service in August 2025, with participation of 10 Somali diplomats.

Indian Community and Diaspora in Somalia:

- Indian traders have been trading with the Horn of Africa since ancient times. In the 1940s and 1950s, many Indians were recruited to work on their plantations, mainly around Qoryoley, South West. Some of them also established businesses in Somalia.
- It is estimated that there were around 200 Indian families in Somalia, mainly engaged in textile dyeing in Mogadishu and Merka. Indian families, who at one time were living in Kismayo, left for Mogadishu in early 1980s. In the past, the Indian embassy used to run a popular international school in Mogadishu. After 1991, most Indians left Somalia, and many relocated to Mombasa in Kenya.
- Presently, it is estimated that there are around 150 Indian nationals working in different parts of Somalia including the UN and around 500 persons of Indian origin in Somalia.

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