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Speech by Amb. Abhishek Singh, High Commissioner on Gandhi Jayanti on 02 October 2026

Good Morning, Namaste.

Distinguished members of the Indian Diaspora, Members of the High Commission of India,

Friends from Nigeria,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet today to observe the 157th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation. A day the United Nations also commemorates as the International Day of Non-Violence.

This soil holds special significance for this occasion. It was in Africa that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi became the Mahatma. It was on this continent that he forged his eternal principles of *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa* - principles that would reshape India's destiny and inspire freedom and civil rights movements across Africa and the world.

This day is therefore an occasion for quiet reflection. Gandhiji's life reminds us that lasting change comes not from power, but from principle.

Permit me to recall three guiding examples from his life:

Firstly, in South Africa. When faced with injustice, he chose Satyagraha over retaliation. He proved that non-violence is not weakness, but the highest form of courage and strength.

Secondly, in Champaran. He went to stand with indigo farmers. He showed us that true leadership lies in serving the last person in the line – Antyodaya.

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Thirdly, the Dandi March. A handful of salt became a symbol of a nation's resolve. He taught us that when the cause is just, even the smallest act can become historic.

Friends, these values remain at the very core of New India.

Under the visionary leadership of **Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi**, we have seen Bapu's vision translated into national missions: *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* reflects his belief that cleanliness is next to godliness.

The call for *Atmanirbhar Bharat* and *Vocal for Local* revives the spirit of *Swadeshi* and *self-reliance*.

And the principle of *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas* and *Sabka Prayas* is the modern expression of *Sarvodaya*. This connect between India and Africa is deep and abiding.

Gandhi's first Satyagraha was in Africa. Africa made Gandhi, and Gandhi inspired Africa. From Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to Nelson Mandela, leaders across this continent drew strength from his ideals. The same moral force that freed India in 1947 inspired Nigeria's independence in 1960.

So, when we celebrate Gandhi Jayanti just a day after Nigeria's 66th Independence Day, it is indeed a double celebration of freedom, of friendship, and of shared values.

For the Indian community in Nigeria, this message has special meaning. Through your hard work, peace, and unity, you represent the best of India abroad. Through your dedication and integrity, you have not only built successful lives for yourselves but have made invaluable contributions to the economic and social fabric of Nigeria. You are the most vital bridge between our two great nations - a friendship built on mutual respect, shared struggles and a vision for common growth.

Let me conclude with a small story that captures the essence of Gandhi. Once a mother brought her child to Bapu and said, "Bapu, please tell my son to stop eating sugar." Gandhiji said, "Come after a week." After a week, when they returned, he told the child, "Stop eating sugar." The surprised mother asked, "Why didn't you say that a week ago?" Bapu smiled and replied, "A week ago, I myself was eating sugar."

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That is Gandhiji. **Be the change you want to see in the world.**

On this Gandhi Jayanti, let us reaffirm our pledge to live his timeless ideals - in our homes, in our work, and in our service to society. Let us act with compassion, lead with truth, and continue to be exemplary ambassadors of India's rich culture and values in Nigeria.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
