

Strengthening The Bonds Of Democracy: India Republic Day 2026

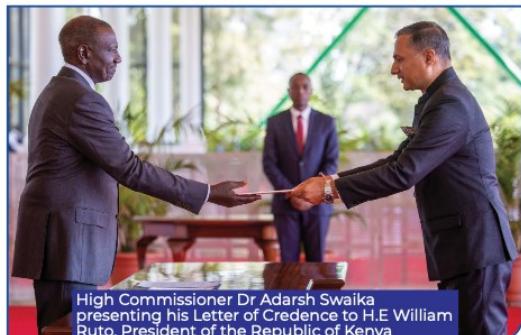
BY KAMAL KAUR

Dr Adarsh Swaika is a career diplomat of the Indian Foreign Service with extensive experience in international relations and strategic policy. As the High Commissioner of India to Kenya, he has been instrumental in deepening the multifaceted partnership between New Delhi and Nairobi. His tenure has seen a revitalised focus on trade, healthcare, and technology, ensuring that the historical ties between the two nations continue to thrive in a modern, digital era.



As India celebrates its 77th Republic Day, how would you describe the current trajectory of the India Kenya relationship and what role do these historical celebrations play in strengthening our modern diplomatic ties?

India and Kenya share an excellent bilateral relationship marked by frequent high-level exchanges, expanding economic engagement, and deeper people-to-people connections. What makes this partnership distinctive is its historical connect, built on shared experiences of colonialism, democratic traditions, and pluralistic societies. Republic Day celebrations are an apt occasion to reflect on these shared values while also reaffirming our commitment to a modern, future-oriented partnership. Such moments of commemoration & celebration reinforce the idea that our relationship is not transactional, but values-based, drawing strength from history while responding to contemporary realities.



High Commissioner Dr Adarsh Swaika presenting his Letter of Credence to H.E William Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya

This year's Republic Day theme emphasises a self-reliant India that contributes to global stability. How is the High Commission working to align this vision with Kenya's own development goals, particularly in the sectors of manufacturing and agro processing?

The Covid pandemic demonstrated to the world the importance of resilient supply chains. At the same time, it also reminded us of the importance of 'Self-reliance' when supply chains could be disrupted due to various geo-political and logistical factors. India has embarked on the mission of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' ie a self-reliant India as enunciated by Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. The High Commission actively encourages partnerships that align Indian manufacturing strengths with Kenya's development priorities, particularly in value addition, local manufacturing and agro-processing. Indian experience in affordable manufacturing technologies, small and medium enterprise ecosystems, and food processing offers practical solutions that support Kenya's industrialisation and food security goals. Our focus is on partnerships that create local employment, build skills, and strengthen supply chains rather than merely expanding trade volumes.

India remains one of Kenya's largest trading partners with hundreds of companies operating locally. During this celebratory period, are there specific new investment frontiers or bilateral trade agreements that you hope to see come to fruition in the coming year?

India's economic engagement with Kenya continues to evolve beyond traditional sectors. There is growing interest in renewable energy, healthcare manufacturing, digital services, automobiles, banking and finance, and agro-based industries. We also see strong potential in collaboration between start-ups and MSMEs from both countries. In the coming year, the emphasis will be on facilitating greater business interactions, encouraging joint ventures, and ensuring that investments are sustainable and locally embedded. Such engagement strengthens economic resilience while delivering tangible benefits to communities on the ground.

Education and capacity building have always been pillars of the bilateral relationship. Could you share your thoughts on how the High Commission intends to expand the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programmes for Kenyan professionals and students in 2026?

Capacity building remains one of the most enduring and impactful dimensions of India-Kenya cooperation. As many are aware, every year the Government of India offers fully funded 240 short term training slots and 80 scholarships for higher education to Kenyans. In 2026, the focus will be on expanding training opportunities in emerging and future-oriented areas such as digital governance, renewable energy, climate adaptation, public health, entrepreneurship, and skill development. Alongside individual training programmes, the High Commission is keen to promote stronger institutional linkages between educational and training institutions in both countries, as well as demand driven customized courses. The objective is to ensure that capacity-building efforts remain demand-driven and aligned with Kenya's evolving development priorities. Such training programmes are not limited to officials of the Central Government but to county governments as well.

Cultural diplomacy is a significant part of the Republic Day spirit. How does the High Commission plan to engage the vibrant Indian origin community in Kenya during the festivities to promote a deeper people to people understanding between our two cultures?

The Indian-origin community in Kenya is a vital bridge between the two societies, with deep historical roots and a strong sense of belonging to Kenya. Republic Day celebrations provide an opportunity to engage this community not only through ceremonial events but also through cultural, youth, and community-oriented initiatives. By highlighting shared histories, cultural expressions, and contemporary contributions, the High Commission seeks to promote a deeper and more inclusive people-to-people understanding. Such engagement reinforces the idea that cultural diplomacy is most effective when it reflects lived experiences and shared spaces.

Looking ahead to the remainder of 2026, what do you hope will be the most significant milestone achieved in the partnership between India and Kenya, especially regarding shared challenges like climate change and regional security?

My hope and efforts will be to further strengthen the economic partnership between the two countries that contributes to the mutual benefit of the people of both countries. Focus will be on initiating cooperation in new domains, particularly in high-technology areas and fintech. Global challenges like climate change require concerted efforts not only by India and Kenya but by the comity of nations. India is undertaking one of the most ambitious renewable energy programmes of the world with a target of 500 GW of energy from non-fossil fuels by 2030 and is on track to achieve the target. Kenya is one of the few countries that has over 90% of its energy generation from green sources. Both the countries are playing their due part in contributing to address such challenges. It is important that those who bear historical responsibility for climate change and its adverse impacts assist the developing countries through provision of finance, technology and capacity-building. And Nairobi being the environmental capital of the world, can play a pivotal role in this regard.



High Commissioner Dr Adarsh Swaika presenting the letter of Credence to Director-General, United Nations Office at Nairobi H.E. Zainab Hawa Bangura accrediting him as Permanent Representative of India (PR) to UNEP and UN-Habitat.