

INDIA - SWEDEN BILATERAL RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

India and Sweden have had longstanding close relations based on common values; strong business, investment and R&D linkages; and similar approaches to meet global challenges of peace & security and development.

Sweden (the largest Nordic country in terms of landmass, population and GDP) is a member of the EU and Schengen visa regime but not the Eurozone. Sweden has applied for NATO membership.

Sweden has a population of around 10 million and a GDP of around USD 550 billion and total trade of around USD 335 billion (exports USD 170 billion). It has a landmass of around 0.5 million sq km, a coastline of more than 3,000 km on the Baltic Sea and is separated from Norway by the Scandinavian mountain chain along a 1,600 km border. Sweden has a land border of over 500 km with Finland. To the south, Sweden is connected with Denmark via a bridge and a tunnel. One third of Swedish territory (more than 150,000 sq km) is considered as its Arctic area where a population of 0.5 million (mainly Saami) resides. Sweden is one of the 8 members of the Arctic Council.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Diplomatic relations were established in 1948 and steadily strengthened over the decades.

The partnership has witnessed a sharp upswing in the high level engagement since 2014, with 10 visits/interactions at Head of State/Head of Government level during this period. This includes eight interactions at Prime Ministerial level (September 2015 New York; February 2016 Make in India Mumbai; April 2018 Stockholm; April 2020 telephone conversation; March 2021 Virtual Summit; May 2021 India EU Summit; and Nov 2021 on the sidelines of COP26 in Glasgow, May 2022 Copenhagen 2nd India – Nordic summit, the visit of President Pranab Mukherjee to Sweden in May-June 2015 and the visit of His Majesty the King of Sweden Carl XVI Gustaf to India in December 2019.

This year there have been six ministerial interactions- Foreign Ministers (Munich in Feb 2022); Environment Ministers (Nairobi in March 2022; Stockholm in June 2022 (Stockholm+50); and Sharm-El-Sheikh in November 2022 (COP27)); Aviation & Infrastructure Ministers (Virtual in March 2022) and Swedish Deputy Prime Minister & Minister for Energy, Business & Industry and our Science & Technology Minister (in hybrid format in October 2022). Despite Covid19 constraints, there were eight substantive Ministerial interactions, most in virtual format in 2020 and eight Ministerial interactions in 2021.

Sweden hosted the First ever India Nordic Summit in Stockholm in April 2018 where Prime Minister Modi and his counterparts from all five Nordic countries participated. Prime Minister of Sweden and India also interacted during the India EU Leaders' Meeting in virtual format on 8 May 2021 and in Glasgow on 1 Nov 2021. Sweden also participated in the First India Nordic Baltic Conclave co-chaired by External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar in November 2020.

Innovation, Technology, Investment and R&D collaborations provide the bedrock of this modern relationship. Sweden is an external oriented economy with focus on services and industry sectors, especially on manufacturing, IT, life sciences, circular economy, clean technologies. Sweden consistently ranks among the top two economies in the world in terms of Innovation.

During the 2018 visit of Prime Minister Modi to Sweden, the two sides adopted a wide-ranging Joint Action Plan and signed a Joint Innovation Partnership. The first high level Dialogue on Innovation Policy was co-

chaired by Prime Minister Modi and the King of Sweden in December 2019. PM Löfven was the Chief Guest at 2016 Make in India event and Sweden hosted a major Make in India event in 2017.

Swedish Deputy Prime Minister & Minister for Energy, Business & Industry and our Science & Technology Minister jointly inaugurated the 9th India Sweden Innovation Day held in hybrid format in October 2022.

Environment Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav visited Sweden in June 2022 to participate in the Stockholm+50 Conference.

Environment Minister from India and Sweden co-chaired a ministerial meeting of LeadIT, a day before the Stockholm+50 Conference in June 2022 and another in November 2022 on the sidelines of COP27 at Sharm-El-Sheikh.

RECENT MINISTERIAL INTERACTIONS

EAM held bilateral discussions with Foreign Minister Ann Linde in Feb 2022 in Munich on the sidelines of Munich Security Conference. They also met a few days later in Paris where France, as EU President, hosted a Ministerial even on Indo-Pacific.

Environment Minister Shri Bhupendra Yadav also interacted with counterpart Minister Annika Strandhäll in Nairobi in March 2022 on the sidelines of UNEA. He also met Minister Annika Strandhäll in Stockholm in June 2022 to co-chair the LeadIT Ministerial and met Minister Romina Pourmokhtari in Sharm El Sheikh in November 2022 to co-chair the LeadIT Ministerial Summit during COP27.

Civil Aviation Minister Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia interacted virtually with counterpart Minister Tomas Eneroth in March 2022.

CIM Shri Piyush Goyal and his counterpart Minister Anna Hallberg had a virtual interaction in April 2021. The two Ministers had addressed the CEO Forum in December 2020 in virtual format and also held discussions in May 2020.

Foreign Minister Ann Linde addressed the Raisina Dialogue in April 2021.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh and Swedish Minister for Defence Mr. Peter Hultqvist spoke at the India-Sweden Defence Industry Cooperation Webinar on the theme of 'Capitalising on Opportunities for Growth and Security' on 8 June, 2021. On this occasion an MOU was signed between Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and Swedish Security and Defence Industry (SOFF) to promote bilateral defence industrial relations.

Minister of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences (IC), Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated the 8th India-Sweden Innovation Day along with Swedish Minister for Business, Industry and Innovation Mr. Ibrahim Baylan on 26 October 2021 on the theme 'India Sweden Innovation Day was India Sweden's green transition.'

Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupendra Yadav and Swedish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Environment, Mr. Per Bolund co-hosted the Lead IT Summit during the COP 26 on 9 Nov 2021. The two Ministers also held bilateral interactions on the sidelines of COP 26 on 9 Nov, 2021.

EAM interacted with FM Ann Linde in Slovenia at Gymnich Lunch in Sep 2021.

Healthcare and Life Sciences has remained an important area of focus over the last decade (*Sweden assisted Indian immunization programmes during 1980s*) and the 11th JWG on Health was held virtually (December 2020). Minister of Health Lena Hallengren addressed the Aarogya Manthan 2.0 in Aug 2020 in a virtual format at the invitation of our Minister. Minister Dr. Harshvardhan addressed the 'Health Talks' organised by the Swedish side during the Nobel Memorial Week in December 2020 in a virtual format. He announced the setting up of a Centre of Excellence in the field of Oncology at AIIMS Jodhpur. 2019 was declared as India Sweden Year of Health (completion of a decade of Health MoU). Minister of Health Lena Hallengren visited India in Feb 2019. An India Sweden Healthcare Innovation Centre was launched in Dec 2019. This is a collaboration between AIIMS Delhi, AIIMS Jodhpur, MoHFW, ICMR and Swedish Trade Commissioner's Office and AstraZeneca.

Minister Gadkari visited Sweden in Feb 2020. A Sweden India Transport Innovation and Safety Partnership (SITIS) was signed during the visit. He met Minister Baylan (Business & Innovation), Minister Tomas Eneroth (Transport & Infrastructure) and Minister Anna Hallberg (Foreign Trade). Minister Gadkari and Minister Baylan inaugurated the Seventh India Sweden Innovation day in November 2020 in a virtual format. There was a thematic session on SITIS.

Minister Javadekar and Dy PM & Minister of Environment Lövin addressed a 'Strategic Forum' organised by the Swedish Institute for International Affairs (UI) in a virtual format in November 2020 on the theme of Climate Action. A ministerial LeadIT (Leadership Group on Industry Transition) meeting was held in December 2020 to mark the fifth anniversary of Paris Agreement. A Joint Ministerial Statement was issued. An Industry Transition Day was held in July 2020. Earlier a high-level meeting of convening members was held on the sidelines of COP25 in December 2019 in Madrid. The operational Work Plan until 2023 has been finalised.

Defence Minister Smt Nirmala Sitharaman had visited Sweden in February 2019. Swedish Chief of Air Staff participated in the first ever Air Chiefs Conclave held during the Aero India Show 2021 in Feb 2021 in virtual format.

There has been a regular exchange of official and business delegations over the last several years. In the last five years around 40 Indian delegations at Ministerial/Senior Official level have visited Sweden.





INVESTMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE LINKAGES

Sweden's natural resources include iron, timber, fisheries and hydro power. Sweden has, therefore, focussed on manufacturing, IT, life sciences, circular economy, and clean technologies. Sweden has created an exemplary innovation ecosystem where it consistently ranks among the top two economies in the world.

Sweden's major industries include automotive, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, industrial machines, precision equipment, chemical goods, home appliances, forestry, iron, and steel. Many large businesses belong to the Wallenberg group - Ericsson (telecom), SEB (banking), SAAB (defence production), ABB (electrical equipment, automation), Electrolux (home appliances), SKF (bearings), Atlas Copco (industrial equipment, mining), AstraZeneca (pharma), Grand Hotel among others. Other leading Swedish companies and brands include: IKEA (furniture retail), H&M (clothing and interiors), Tetra Pack (packaging), AlfaLaval (heavy industry), BAE (defence), Volvo (automotive), Sandvik (engineering), Scania (a automotive), Spotify and Truecaller (IT).

Several innovations including safety match, seat belt, zipper, ultrasound, pacemaker, tetra pack, telephone handset, skype have Swedish roots.

India Sweden Trade and investment have grown rapidly in recent years. Trade in goods and services has increased from USD 3 billion (2016) to USD 4.6 billion (2021). India is the 3rd largest trading partner for Sweden in Asia. The number of Swedish companies with business presence in India has increased from around 150 to around 250 in the last five years or so. The number of Indian companies with business presence has increased from around 50 to 75 over a similar period.

Swedish business presence in India dates back more than a hundred years (*Ericsson, Swedish Match Co., SKF, ABB*) and has concentrated especially in Pune since 1960s. The next wave of investment followed over the last two decades, which has further picked up in the past five years.

Swedish companies are among the leading global players in several fields and are present in India in sectors including IT (Ericsson, Spotify, Truecaller), automobiles (Volvo, Scania), earth moving & mining (Alfa Laval, Scania), process plant equipment (Sandvik), electrical engg. & AI (ABB, SKF), pharmaceuticals (AstraZeneca), packaging (Tetra Pack) sustainable urban solutions (waste management, water, IT solutions), retail (IKEA, H&M), and defence (SAAB). Several Swedish SMEs are also active in India esp. in IT, renewable energy and manufacturing. Swedish companies have a long record of manufacturing in India and rank among the top in Making in India.

There is a growing Indian business presence in Sweden, especially in IT sector (around 50). Some Indian companies have also made acquisitions in recent years in Sweden (Bharat Forge, Wipro, Cadila Pharmaceuticals, Aditya Birla, Crompton Greaves, Altruist Technologies, HCL Technology etc.). Indian biotech and pharma companies including Dr. Reddys, Biocon, Kemwell and Cadila Pharma have formed collaborative relations in Sweden.

Various mechanisms, established in recent years, including the India Sweden Business Round Table (ISBLRT), Sweden India Business Council (SIBC), remained actively engaged in promoting business linkages, as did the entities such as Invest India, Business Sweden, CII, DPIIT, CII and India Sweden Healthcare Innovations Centre.

Embassy of India supports the organisation of an annual India Sweden Innovation Day. Sweden also hosts a Sweden India Nobel Memorial Week in India focusing on promoting business and academic linkages.

Around 8,500 business visas were issued to Swedish nationals during 2019.

RESEARCH & INNOVATION COLLABORATION

Departments of S&T (DST) and Biotechnology (DBT), along with GITA (DST-CII collaboration) and ICMR from India are partnering Swedish agencies including Vinnova (Swedish Govt Innovation and R&D agency), Swedish Energy Agency, Swedish Research Council and FORTE (under Ministry of Health) to co-fund projects relating to research and industrial applications.

The range of areas of cooperation include : Smart Cities & CleanTech, Nano Sciences, Computer Sciences, AI, Smart Grids, Energy Research (storage, e-mobility, new fuels), water, waste to wealth, circular economy, embedded systems, new technologies. Other areas include : Digitisation and Internet of Things (IOT), Health & Life Sciences, Biomedical Devices, Bio-Economy, Startups, Test Beds, Bioclusters, Digital Healthcare, Ageing, New materials, Space & Aeronautics etc.

BILATERAL INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION MECHANISMS

A range of MoUs and bilateral Agreements exist covering sectors including Science & Technology; Healthcare, Sustainable Urban Development, Renewable Energy, Railways; Space, Polar Science, and Defence. There are a number of Joint Working Groups (JWG) established under many of these MoUs. There also exist agreements on avoidance of Double Taxation Bilateral Investment Protection and Air Services.

The 19th session of Indo-Swedish Joint Commission for Economic, Industrial and Scientific Cooperation (JCEC) was held in Sweden in October 2019. Mid-term review of the Protocol of the 19th meeting of Indo-Swedish JCEC was held virtually in April 2021. The 20th session of Indo-Swedish Joint Commission for Economic, Industrial and Scientific Cooperation is scheduled to take place in New Delhi on 8 December 2022.

The 6th Meeting of India Sweden Joint Committee on Science & Technology was held in Sweden in May 2019. The 2nd India Sweden JWG on Digital Technologies & Economy was held in New Delhi in November 2022. The 11th JWG on Health Cooperation was held in December 2020 in a virtual format. The 12th JWG on Health Cooperation is scheduled to take place in New Delhi in December 2022. The 8th JWG on Defence Cooperation was held in Stockholm in August 2022.

So far six rounds of Foreign Office Consultations have been held. Foreign Office consultations on multilateral issues were held in January 2021 in virtual format and the 2nd round of these Consultations were held in New Delhi in November 2022.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

India and Sweden jointly launched the Leadership Group on Industry Transition (LeadIT) in association with

World Economic Forum (WEF) at the UN Climate Action Summit convened by the UN Secretary General in September 2019 in New York. The Stockholm Environment Institute is the Secretariat for the Lead IT whose membership has since expanded to 35 members including 16 countries (including France, Germany, RoK, UK and USA) and 19 big companies (including Dalmia Cement, Mahindra Group and Spice Jet).

At the first ever UN Conference on Human Environment that was hosted by Sweden in Stockholm in 1972, the Indian delegation was led by PM Indira Gandhi. Environment Minister Shri Bhupendra Yadav led Indian delegation at the Stockholm+50 Conference which Sweden co-hosted with Kenya in June 2022.

Environment Minister from India and Sweden co-chaired a ministerial meeting of LeadIT, a day before the Stockholm+50 Conference in June 2022. Environment Minister co-hosted a ministerial meeting of LeadIT with Minister Romina Pourmokhtari in November 2022 during the COP27 at Sharm El Sheikh.

In the 1980s India and Sweden worked together on nuclear disarmament issues within the framework of the 'Six Nation Peace Summit' (that also included Argentina, Greece, Mexico and Tanzania).

At the UN General Assembly, India and Sweden present an annual Joint Statement on Humanitarian Affairs.

In 2013 during the Swedish Presidency, India joined the Arctic Council as an Observer at the Kiruna Ministerial Meeting.

Both countries have, in the past, joined hands on common causes such as decolonisation, anti-apartheid promoting development partnerships, environment, UN Peacekeeping, UN Peace building and disarmament.

The 1st UN Consultations on multilateral issues at senior official level was held in January 2021. The 2nd India Sweden UN Consultations were held in New Delhi in November 2022.

CULTURAL AND ACADEMIC TIES

In 1913 Rabindranath Tagore became the first non-European to be awarded the Nobel Prize (for Literature). Over the last century, a number of other distinguished Indian nationals/ persons of Indian origin have won the Nobel Prize in different categories.

King Gustav V (great grandfather of HM King Carl XVI Gustaf) received Rabindranath Tagore during the latter's visit to Sweden in 1926. Prince Wilhelm visited Kolkata in 1912 and met the Tagore family. In 1973 a special stamp was issued in Sweden on Rabindranath Tagore. In 2014 a bust of Rabindranath Tagore was installed in the university town of Uppsala to mark the 100 years of the award of Nobel Prize to him.

In mid-1950s, a small bronze statuette of Buddha seated on lotus was discovered from an excavation conducted in an old Viking settlement on the island of Helgö on Lake Mällaren, west of Stockholm. The statuette, popularly known as 'Helgö Buddha' is dated to around 1,400 years ago and is thought to be from Kashmir. In 2015 the Swedish Post issued a special stamp on Helgö Buddha.

Indian classical arts, especially music and dance, are widely appreciated in Sweden. Yoga (and also Ayurveda) are popular among the Swedes. A day long Ayurveda Seminar was organised in Feb 2022 where around 70 Ayurveda practitioners from Sweden joined. Around 20,000 Swedish tourists are estimated to have visited India in 2019.

There are ongoing research linkages between academic institutions and universities between India and Sweden. Some of these include KTH (Royal Institute of Technology), Karlstad University, Uppsala University, Blekinge

Institute of Technology, Linköping University on the Swedish side and IIT Chennai, IIT Guwahati, Vellore Institute of Technology, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar and BHU Varanasi.

Academic Chairs on Indian studies have been established in the past at prominent Swedish Universities – Lund, Gothenburg and Uppsala.

A popular annual cultural event 'Namaste Stockholm' is supported by the Embassy of India. It is estimated that the event attracts around 15,000-20,000 visitors.

Indian Women Football team visited Sweden in Oct 2021 to play friendly matches with Swedish teams. Indian team has a Swedish coach.

INDIAN DIASPORA

The Indian Diaspora in Sweden is estimated to be over 60,000 that includes around 42,000 Indian nationals. Most of them are professionals, predominantly in IT sector. There is a large number of Indian researchers and students in Sweden. There are an estimated 1,500 Indian students in Sweden. So far, around 18,000 Swedish nationals have been issued OCI cards. There are a number of Indian Cultural Associations in Sweden based in Stockholm, Gothenberg, Uppsala, Lund, and Umeå, among others.

HIGH LEVEL VISITS

From the Indian side, there have been six visits at the HoS/HoG level : PM Nehru (1957), PM Indira Gandhi (1972), PM Rajiv Gandhi (1986 & 1988), President Pranab Mukherjee (2015), PM Narendra Modi (2018).

From the Swedish side, there have been eight visits at the HoS/HoG level: PM Tage Erlander (1960), PM Olof Palme (1985), HM King Carl XVI Gustaf (1993), PM Goran Persson (2003), HM King Carl XVI Gustaf (2004), PM Frederik Reinfeldt (2009), PM Stefan Löfven (Make in India Mumbai 2016), HM King Carl XVI Gustaf (2019).

Former PM Goran Persson visited India (2015) to address Vivekananda International Foundation; and former PM Carl Bildt (2020 and 2021) participated at the Raisina Dialogue.