

INDIA-SWEDEN RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

India and Sweden (the largest Nordic country in terms of landmass, population and GDP) 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 is a member of the EU.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

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

The partnership has witnessed a sharp upswing in the last few years with **six visits/interactions at Head of State/Head of Government level in six years**. This includes **four interactions at Prime Ministerial level** (September 2015 New York; February 2016 Make in India Mumbai; April 2018 Stockholm; April 2020 telephone conversation), 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. Even during 2020, despite Covid19 constraints, there were eight substantive Ministerial interactions, most in virtual format.

India and Sweden co-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. 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** economies in the world in terms of **Innovation**. India's ranking in innovation is also climbing rapidly.

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.

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).

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

MINISTERIAL INTERACTIONS DURING 2020

CIM Shri Piyush Goyal and his counterpart **Minister Anna Hallberg** addressed the **CEO Forum** in December 2020. Earlier the two Ministers held discussions during May 2020.

Healthcare and Life Sciences has remained an important area of focus over the last decade (*Sweden supported 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 for Road Transport and Highways Shri. Nitin 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.

Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri. Prakash Javadekar & 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 Show India 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

Trade and investment have grown rapidly in recent years. India-Sweden bilateral trade was 1.862 billion in 2019-20 . 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 **5th in Make 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. TCS, L&T and Tech Mahindra are also active 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**), alongwith **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 Corporation** was held in Sweden in October 2019. The 6th Meeting of India Sweden **Joint Committee on Science & Technology** was held in Sweden in May 2019. The 11th **JWG on Health Cooperation** was held in December 2020 in a virtual format. The 7th **JWG on Defence Cooperation** was held in Delhi in December 2018. So far six rounds of **Foreign Office Consultations** have also been held.

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 LeadIT whose membership has since expanded to **29 members** including 13 countries (including France, Germany, RoK and UK) and 16 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.

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 Peacebuilding and disarmament.

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.

In 18th century, the Swedish East India Company ships used to trade at ports in Gujarat and Bengal.

Indian classical arts, especially music and dance, are widely appreciated in Sweden. **Yoga** (and also **Ayurveda**) are popular among the Swedes. 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 DIASPORA

The Indian Diaspora in Sweden is estimated to be over **40,000** that includes around **35,000 Indian nationals**. Most of them are professionals and around 10,000 are estimated to be working in IT sector. There is a large number of Indian researchers and students in Sweden. So far, around **14,000 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. There are approx 1500 Indian students pursuing studies in Sweden.

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