

Welcome PM Modi: The rise of modern India has affected Sweden in multiple and profound ways

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In a few days' time, I will welcome my dear friend Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Stockholm. His visit is a clear indication of the great friendship between our two countries and follows my visit to Mumbai in 2016.

The rise of modern India has affected Sweden in multiple and profound ways. Sweden and Swedish companies have been making a significant and growing contribution to India over the past century. Today, some 180 Swedish companies are present in India, providing high-end goods and services to the Indian market, and employing some 1,90,000 Indians directly.

Sweden is ranked in the top 5 of countries who 'Make in India', with accelerating investments in areas such as research and development, people and the environment. Companies such as Volvo, Tetra Pak and Ericsson are now, together with new innovators such as Truecaller, household names in both Sweden and India. The opening of IKEA's retail operations in 2018 is yet another example of Swedish industry's deepening engagement with India. Many of these Swedish companies are frontrunners when it comes to progressive labour market practices and sustainable production methods.

The contribution of the Indian diaspora to Swedish society and culture cannot be emphasised enough and is evident not least in the IT and high tech

sectors, where Indians form the single largest group of non-EU professionals in Sweden. And tens of thousands of Swedes travel to India each year for business or leisure. All in all, the people-to-people contacts between our countries have grown tremendously, and Air India's recent introduction of direct flights between Stockholm and New Delhi is a very helpful step.

In my view, PM Modi's visit presents a great opportunity to strengthen this partnership, not least within the field of innovation – the key to future growth, jobs and sustainability for both our countries. The

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Indian government is seeking to foster innovation, which complements my government's objective of deepening Swedish innovation links globally.

Since I established the Swedish National Innovation Council in 2015, five national innovation partnership programmes have been launched, supporting a unique set-up of testbeds, where we invite partners to test new ground-breaking technologies. Both Sweden and India are investing to enhance and sustain their respective research and innovation ecosystems.

I am convinced that India and Sweden



can build a unique partnership. A partnership where we innovate together on everything from smart cities to eMobility and smart grids, from digitalisation to smart manufacturing. Where we jointly support industry in research and development projects that address the challenges to our societies. Where we explore how we can accelerate the growth of innovative start-ups. And where we explore how Indian and Swedish actors can benefit from our respective innovation infrastructures, such as innovation ecosystems, testbeds and living labs.

In our interconnected world of today, we all face similar challenges, which is why we must also fashion joint responses based on our shared values of democracy and human rights. No important global conversation – whether on climate change or cyber security – is complete

without the voice of India. PM Modi has shown strong dedication to these vital global issues. Under his leadership, India has ratified the Paris Agreement and is making the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda a priority objective.

In a globalised world, upholding international norms and law in international peace and security, export control and non-proliferation, as well as in trade, is paramount. Sweden shares this conviction with India. Our countries are active partners in multilateral fora and have a proud history of service to the UN, in particular in peacekeeping operations, where India is a major troop contributing country. Sweden's support for India as a permanent member of a reformed UN Security Council is steadfast. Sweden also supports India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

India, the European Union and Sweden have all been affected by heinous acts of terrorism. I support strengthened cooperation between Sweden, the EU and India in efforts to combat terrorism and radicalisation, wherever it stems from, and I support enhanced cooperation in the field of cyber security.

I am committed to deepening Swedish-Indian ties and I am certain that PM Modi's visit will take our excellent relationship even further. Our countries have a unique opportunity to leverage each other's strengths to innovate for the future, for the benefit of this planet and for coming generations.

The writer is Prime Minister of Sweden.