



# INDIA-SWEDEN STRATEGIC COMPASS

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## CURRENT AFFAIRS

### 'Smart City Sweden Roadshow' Held in India

The Smart City Mission has been running since 2015, when Prime Minister Modi announced the project in a bid to improve the quality of life and sustainability of infrastructure in 100 cities around India. The project is coming to a head in several of these cities, in part thanks to the collaboration with Sweden. As a world leader in urban sustainability through innovations in Swedish cities, Sweden is now looking to share these innovative smart models in India's rapidly growing cities. The Embassy of Sweden in India, the Consulate General of Sweden in Mumbai, Smart City Sweden, IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute, Business Sweden, and Vinnova came together to host a Swedish Smart City Roadshow through Chennai, Pune, Panjim, and Delhi – deepening cooperation with these Indian cities. Areas of development are water management, waste management, mobility, transportation, and energy.

Source: *The Economic Times*, February 12, 2023; *IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute*, March 3, 2023

### Indian Industrial Bodies Visit Sweden

Cooperation among industrial sectors is on the rise between India and Sweden. An Indian delegation from its pulp and paper, cement, iron, and steel industries traveled to Sweden on a visit hosted by Smart City Sweden. This was a collaborative effort between Smart City Sweden, Business Sweden, the Swedish Energy Agency, IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute and CII Indian Green Business Council. The visiting delegation engaged in a discussion on how to deepen cooperation and collaboration on reducing fossil fuel emissions to become more environmentally sustainable. The Indian delegation was shown trailblazing Swedish industry innovations in Stockholm, Luleå, and Falun. In



these Swedish cities, many companies operate on minimal fossil-fuel emissions and in some cases, are beginning to produce fossil-free materials. Sweden is emerging as a leading country in the green transition, particularly in areas such as green steel and green cement, including in areas such as sustainable practices relates to forestry and paper production.

Source: *Smart City Sweden*, February 10, 2023

### Republic Day Celebrations in Stockholm

2023 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India-Sweden diplomatic relations. To commemorate this occasion, a Republic Day Reception was held in Stockholm to celebrate the progress and success of India-Sweden relations. Swedish Foreign Trade Minister Johan Forssell spoke at the event sharing his thoughts on India-Sweden relations and how they have developed over the years. In the context of a potential India-EU Free Trade Agreement, he highlighted the “shared values and common interest” between India and Sweden as foundations to build further. He said that there are more than 50,000 people of Indian descent currently living in Sweden who make a big contribution to Swedish society. Mr. Forssell sees India and Sweden’s relationship as something much



more profound than an economic partnership. Looking to the future, he sees huge potential for the two nations given India's recent Presidency of the G20 and Sweden's appointment as President of the Council of the EU.

*Source: @IndiainSweden, January 27, 2023; @IndiainSweden, February 1, 2023.*

speaker. This successful event, alongside the Swedish Smart City Roadshow, highlights Nordic-wide interest and investment in Indian cities' infrastructure and energy production.

*Source: @FinlandinIndia, November 28, 2022; @VilleSkinnari, February 11, 2023; @FinlandinIndia, February 12, 2023*

### **Indo-Finish Ministerial Meeting and Discussion on Critical Areas**

Mr. Skinnari joined Mr. Vestre in arranging a meeting with Piyush Goyal, Indian Minister of Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and Textiles. They met to strengthen partnerships on Nordic-Indian trade, to discuss India's green transition, and matters on shipping. Separately, Mr. Vestre held a bilateral meeting with Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

*Source: @PiyushGoyal, February 9, 2023; @shipmin\_india, February 9, 2023*

## **INDIA-NORDIC**

### **Finland Opens New Consulate in Mumbai**

On February 10, Finland opened a new Consulate General in Mumbai. Present at the inauguration was Finnish Ambassador Ritva Koukku-Ronde and Finnish Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade Ville Skinnari. Finland is increasing its links with India, finding common ground on environmental factors and future green technologies.

*Source: @Ulcoministerio, February 10, 2023*

### **Finland's Smart Infrastructure Day in India**

Much like Sweden, Finland has also been working with India on smart city innovation. On his visit to Mumbai, Mr. Skinnari participated at a Smart Infrastructure Day event held by Finland. This event followed the success of Finland's Smart Infrastructure Day in Bangladesh last November. The theme of the event was a 'Roadmap to Carbon Neutrality by 2035'. The event focused particularly on smart innovation in construction, ports, and transitioning to greener forms of energy. Norwegian Minister of Trade & Industry, Jan Christian Vestre was also in attendance as a guest

## **INDIA-EU**

### **Closer Cooperation on Trade & Technology**

The strategic partnership between the EU and India has seen an upward trend through the launch of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council. The council's focus will be on making improvements to supply chain issues on new technologies between the two parties. This is part of a bigger EU-India initiative to prioritize sustainable economic practices and make future technologies in an environmentally friendly way. The new council also compliments the EU's Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Support for the new council was voiced by Swedish Foreign Trade Minister Johan Forssell during his Republic Day Reception speech in Stockholm. Alignment on trade and technology between the EU and India on the new council reinforces the positive trajectory of their relations. Notably, the EU-India Trade and Technology Council is the first such council that India has established with any partner, and the second such bilateral forum for the EU. In 2021, the EU had launched its first trade and technology council with the United States.

*Source: @Trade\_EU, February 6, 2023; EU Commission, February 6, 2023*

## External Affairs Minister of India Visits Central Europe

In a bid to strengthen ties with Europe, particularly with the Central European countries, India's Minister of External Affairs, Dr. S. Jaishankar recently visited Austria, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Dr. Jaishankar met Austrian Foreign Minister, Alexander Schallenberg, Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Lipavský, and Slovak Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Rastislav Káčer. Topics of discussion included India-EU relations, local politics and neighboring states, the Indo-Pacific region and the Ukraine conflict. Speaking after the meeting, Mr. Schallenberg said that agreements had been reached on furthering economic cooperation and business links. Illegal migration and human trafficking were also topics of discussion.

Source: @DrSJaishankar, January 2, 2023; @a\_schallenberg, January 2, 2023



## Indo-French Strategic Dialogue

French Diplomatic Advisor to the President, Emmanuel Bonne met with India's National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval in India in early January. The dialogue was focused on developing their strategic partnership across the board. Important discussions took place on matters of defense, counter-terrorism, civilian nuclear energy, space, and cybersecurity. This is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the India-France security dialogue.

Source: @FranceinIndia, January 5, 2023; Ambassade de France en Inde, January 17, 2023

## Roadmap to France-India-UAE Trilateral Cooperation

Trilateral cooperation initiative between France, India, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is at a progressive stage. The foreign ministers of the three countries held a phone call recently to adopt a roadmap for the implementation of the cooperation initiative among the three countries. The trilateral format witnessed its origin on September 19, 2022, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The foreign ministers discussed a range of issues on their phone call, including the desire to uphold international stability and prosperity. Critical issues such as clean energy, solar energy, climate change, and biodiversity including environmental protection were the main issues of discussion. Interest was expressed on how to engage with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in areas such as environment, biodiversity, and clean energy. On February 4, 2023, the three countries adopted a roadmap for future cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region. They released a statement detailing their ambitions to collaborate on defense, cultural bonds, research for new technologies, sustainability and climate change initiatives, and global health initiatives. Such an announcement makes their cooperation a formal initiative. This format has emerged in the backdrop of the Indian G20 Presidency and the UAE hosting the COP-28.

Source: Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, February 4, 2023; Reuters, February 4, 2023; Hindustan Times, February 4, 2023

## PROFILING INDIA

### More Investment in Indian Green Hydrogen Mission

The Indian government has announced a new INR 197,000 million investment into its Green Hydrogen Mission outlined last year. Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said the intention is to establish India as a major center for the export and manufacture of green hydrogen and its derivatives. Arunabha Ghosh, CEO of the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) spoke about the new investment on CNBC News. He said it marks Indian interest in finding new, more reliable forms of energy to counter

the increasing challenges of climate change. If the targets are met of producing 5 million tons a year by 2030, India would achieve the largest national production of hydrogen worldwide. That would be “half of the entire EU’s domestic production target”. He hopes that it will make India more self-reliant through stimulating domestic industry innovation. Sandeep Kashyap, CEO of the ACME Group, looks at these developments positively. In addition to its interest in the Green Hydrogen Mission, the ACME Group has been working alongside Norfund, the Norwegian Investment Fund, to sign a framework agreement on the development of greenfield sustainable energy projects in India.

Source: @CEEWIndia, January 5, 2023; The Indian Express, January 5, 2023; @ACMEGroup\_India, January 25, 2023

### India Strikes Significant Airplane Deal

Positive developments have been struck in Indian aviation industry’s engagement with major companies from France, the UK and the U.S. In an important move, Air India, which is owned by Tata Group, has struck a deal with European and American aircraft companies, Airbus and Boeing. As per the deal, 250 aircraft from Airbus and 220 aircraft from Boeing have been ordered. This deal has enormous significance for the U.S. who are involved via Boeing, and also the U.K. via engines supplied by Rolls-Royce. Not only does this mean a lot for Indian collaboration with France, the U.S., and the U.K., but it will also transform Air India’s position in the aviation industry. Air India will now be able to operate at a much larger scale, and importantly, to more destinations.

Source: La Tribune, February 14, 2023; BBC, February 15, 2023; BBC, February 15, 2023

### India’s Rising Presence at WEF

India played a key role in this year’s World Economic Forum (WEF), putting forward leading perspectives from Asia. Several Indian business leaders were not just present at the annual meet, but actively participated in the debates including Ashwini Vaishnaw, Indian Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology. He stressed that amid the U.S.-

Chinese rivalry on technology, India is becoming an increasingly vital manufacturer on global technology. For him, India is in a strong position to become a reliable producer of semiconductors and other chip components.

Source: CNN, January 19, 2023; Nikkei Asia, January 21, 2023

### 14<sup>th</sup> Edition of Aero India Air Show

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of Aero India in mid-February. It is a biennial air show which hosts exhibits on both civil and military aviation technology. The theme of this year’s edition was “The runway to a billion



opportunities". The event highlighted India's Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance) in the defense sector that Prime Minister Modi has been pushing for some time. India's progress in areas such as defense, space technologies, advancement and growth in the UAVs sectors, including design leadership, was clearly visible. This event also highlighted how India is exporting indigenous air platforms like the Light Combat Helicopter, HTT-40, Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-Tejas, Dornier Light Utility Helicopter (LUH) and Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) etc. The Indian Ministry of Defence described it as "a unique opportunity for exchange of information, ideas, and new developments in the aviation industry". This event was attended by Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, along with defense ministers from over 30 countries. With more than 800 defense firms participating in the event, it is "Asia's largest aero show". Swedish defense and aerospace company SAAB held one of the major exhibitions. They showcased their new Gripen-E fighter aircraft amongst numerous other products and technologies.

Source: *The Hindu*, January 3, 2023; SAAB, February 9, 2023; @NarendraModi, February 13, 2023; @Thetatvaindia, February 13, 2023

### **ChatGPT Provides New Connections for Rural India**

India was a key part of the discussion on artificial intelligence (AI) at the World Economic Forum. Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, hailed a recent experience in India regarding ChatGPT, an innovative new AI system. The experience highlights India's growing use of technology to adapt to the challenges of language in a multilingual state. Nadella explains that a man in rural India used the ChatGPT AI tool to translate important Indian Government documents into his local language and then to fill in the documents for him. He suggests that the spread of AI technology in India is happening at a much greater speed than even the rise of the internet. India's focus on prioritizing digital public goods such as ChatGPT shows its willingness and ambition to be a world leader and an advocate of new technologies and AI.

Source: @Valerio\_eintel, January 20, 2023

### **Digital India Grows to New Heights**

Speaking at the World Economic Forum, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Indian Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology stated that "in December 2022, [Indian] digital payment transactions amounted to 1.5 trillion dollars". That is more than four times the combined amount of the U.S., UK, Germany and France. This significant difference in digital payment transactions showcases Indian technological development and its ability to shape the direction of future digital technology.

Source: @ANI, January 20, 2023

## **INDIA-GLOBAL**

### **1<sup>st</sup> G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting**

Numerous meetings have been held between G20 members since India took over presidency. A highlight over the past two months has been the 1<sup>st</sup> G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting in Bengaluru. Swedish Minister of Finance Elisabeth Svantesson attended on behalf of the EU Council of Ministers. The meeting explored economic issues such as aiding multilateral development banks on meeting modern challenges. Urban sustainability and inclusion in cities were also raised as a priority.



Directly following this meeting, the Finance and Central Bank Deputies held a second meeting. The G20 Heads of State Summit will be held on September 9-10.

*Source: G20, February 19, 2023; @FinansdepSv, February 23, 2023*

### **Operation Dost: Humanitarian Aid to Turkey & Syria**



India provided a quick response to the serious earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in early February. Substantial humanitarian aid was sent to alleviate the damage and save lives. Several flights from India provided search and rescue teams for victims under the rubble, along with 5,945 tons of emergency equipment and medicine worth over INR 70 million. The Indian Army played a key role setting up field hospitals and providing medical equipment. Trained medical personnel were also sent to provide treatment within these field hospitals. Operation Dost is a demonstration of India's leadership and commitment to providing support for natural disasters around the world.

*Source: The Economics Times, February 19, 2023; Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, February 14, 2023*

### **India Hosts the Voice of Global South Summit**

India hosted a Voice of the Global South Summit online on January 12-13, 2023, wherein 125 countries participated, excluding EU member states, the UK, the US, China, and Russia and other developed countries. This summit provides

a platform for the Global South to put forward its opinions and goals. Topics discussed include global health security, food security, education provision, investment in renewable energy, climate action, and digital public goods. Given the variety of topics discussed, the summit had an apt slogan: 'Unity of Voice, Unity of Purpose'. By providing a platform to express a united Global South voice, India enabled greater representation of a group who are often unheard internationally.

*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, January 13, 2023; The Hindu, January 17, 2023*

### **One Year Anniversary of UAE-India CEPA**

The UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, CEPA has completed one year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Minister Piyush Goyal hailed the agreement, which was signed on February 18 last year. The agreement was made on the basis of facilitating economic connections and supply chains between the two nations and the wider region of West Asia and Africa. By the end of the decade, the agreement aims to provide a route to \$100 billion in non-oil commerce annually.

*Source: The Economic Times, February 18, 2023; @NarendraModi, February 19, 2023*

### **UK-India Defense Commitments in Uttar Pradesh**

UK Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence Alex Chalk was in India for the Uttar Pradesh Global Investors Summit. Following discussions with Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, he announced that the UK has signed seven MoUs with the state on investments worth GBP 165 million in the sectors of defense, aerospace, and medicine in Uttar Pradesh, enhancing the region's defense capabilities. While in the country, Mr. Chalk also attended the Aero India air show. At the event, he promoted Rolls-Royce jet engines as a potential for investment and stressed the importance of strengthening international supply chains between the UK and India amid the conflict in Ukraine.

*Source: The Hindu, February 13, 2023; Hindustan Times, February 13, 2023; @DefenceHQ, February 13, 2023.*



## EDITOR'S NOTE

The initial months of 2023 have set a promising stage for India-Nordic ties to grow in the coming year. A Smart City Sweden Roadshow in key Indian cities put urban sustainability on the forefront which continues to remain a key area of bilateral collaboration. The Smart City Sweden initiative also witnessed the visit of an Indian industrial delegation focusing on fossil fuels to Stockholm, furthering scope for cooperation.

Meanwhile, the opening of Finland's Consulate in Mumbai showed the Nordic country's focus on increasing its links with India while its Smart Infrastructure Day promoted collaborative innovation in construction, ports, and the transition to greener forms of energy. The attention on building a green technology link between India and the Nordic states is gaining traction and should become a priority area of cooperation.

Similarly, India-EU ties have seen continued momentum into 2023, with the World Economic Forum putting India in the limelight due to its growing use of technology; for instance, to adapt to the challenges of language in a multilingual state, Indians used the AI system ChatGPT to translate state documents into local dialects. Concurrently, ever-increasing digital payment transactions showcase Indian technological development and its ability to shape the direction of future digital technology. Growing India-France synergy and the establishment of an EU-India Trade and Technology Council along with the upcoming G20 Summit under Delhi's Presidency, the Aero India air show, and the signing of seven MoUs between UK and India on defense sector commitments in Uttar Pradesh of India reflect that the India-Europe synergy is growing strongly across sectors.

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