

12th India-Sweden Innovation Day, Stockholm

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Speech by Shri Anurag Bhushan

Ambassador of India to Sweden

H.E. Shri Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Government of India, H.E. Sara Modig, State Secretary to the Minister for Energy, Business and Industry, Swedish Ministry of Climate and Enterprise,

Excellencies, distinguished guests, innovators, business leaders, researchers, fellow Indians who have travelled to Stockholm, and dear friends,

A very warm welcome to all of you. It gives me immense pleasure to address this august gathering at the 12th India–Sweden Innovation Day, co-hosted by India Unlimited, the Embassy of India in Stockholm, and the Sweden–India Business Council. To our Swedish friends, we deeply value your presence here today; to our Indian colleagues who have travelled to be with us, your participation reflects the depth of our partnership and our shared vision.

Allow me at the outset to acknowledge the presence of the Hon’ble Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Shri Nitin Gadkari, who will soon deliver the inaugural address. His pioneering initiatives in green mobility, renewable integration, and sustainable road construction embody the very spirit of this Innovation Day. They show us that when ideas are applied with conviction, they can change not only industries but also the daily lives of millions.

Friends, over the years, this platform has evolved from being just a dialogue forum into a true catalyst for action. It has brought together government, academia, industry, and startups, helping us move from concept to collaboration, from partnership to tangible progress. Today, as the world

grapples with climate change, health challenges, digital divides, and resource constraints, such cooperation is not just desirable, it is indispensable.

India–Sweden relations are stronger today than ever before. Our leaders and institutions have worked to build robust frameworks — from the Joint Innovation Partnership to the High-Level Dialogue on Innovation — so that policy, finance, and technology can converge in service of sustainable solutions.

At the same time, we have ensured that innovation is backed by strong governance and implementation structures. The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, provides strategic direction for research and innovation. Its Executive Council approves guidelines, fund managers, and project scopes. Most notably, the Government of India has launched the **Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) Scheme**, approved by the Union Cabinet in July 2025. With an allocation of ₹1 lakh crore (approximately 12 billion USD), this scheme is India's most prominent innovation fund to date. It seeks to scale up R&D and innovation in strategic and emerging sectors, aligning with the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047** — a developed India that is self-reliant (*Atmanirbhar Bharat*), globally competitive, and deeply invested in deep-tech areas with strong private sector participation.

Together, we are shaping new pathways in clean energy, AI, smart cities, digital health, sustainable mobility, advanced materials, and the circular economy.

Let me also take a moment to recognize the Indian companies working here in Sweden. Whether in IT services, pharmaceuticals, or manufacturing, they are not just expanding their business footprint but also acting as cultural and economic bridges — promoting bilateral interests, creating jobs, and reinforcing the idea that innovation thrives when diverse talents work together.

In the era of globalization, the global agenda has steadily evolved. Development goals have taken centre-stage, even as climate change has become a shared priority. Trade has acquired greater prominence, while food and health access are now recognized as essential to global well-being. On security, multilateral institutions have engaged in peacekeeping and disarmament discussions. As a result, platforms like the United Nations, and indeed gatherings like ours today, have become natural spaces to debate and shape solutions to pressing global issues.

Our External Affairs Minister, in his recent address at the 80th United Nations General Assembly, reminded us that trust and fairness must return to multilateralism. He underlined that technology should be treated as a global public good, and that sustainability must be pursued in ways that are equitable and inclusive. These are principles that resonate strongly with the India–Sweden partnership. When we co-create affordable, scalable, and sustainable innovations, we are not only serving our two nations but also contributing to global good.

Both India and Sweden are recognized as innovation leaders. India ranks first in Central and Southern Asia and continues to rise in the Global Innovation Index, while Sweden proudly holds second place worldwide. This reflects the vitality of our ecosystems, the boldness of our entrepreneurs, and the vision of our policymakers. India's vast scale and digital transformation, combined with Sweden's deep research culture and sustainability leadership, create a partnership of unique strength and potential.

Friends, under the theme of this year's Innovation Day, I would like to highlight a few domains where our collaboration is already making a difference:

- In clean energy, green industry, and smart grids, we are advancing renewable

integration, green hydrogen, carbon capture, bio-based materials, and energy storage-solutions.

- In sustainable mobility, India's push toward e-mobility, biofuels, and innovative road construction using recycled materials, industrial by-products, jute, and coir resonates strongly with Sweden's sustainable transport goals. Under the leadership of Hon'ble Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari, India is pioneering cost-effective and environmentally friendly infrastructure solutions.
- In digital innovation, AI, and health tech, our joint calls encourage collaboration in AI-powered health diagnostics, digital public infrastructure, and smart city systems. India's digital platforms like UPI offer strong cases for integration with Swedish expertise in secure, scalable systems.
- In the circular economy and sustainable value chains, joint research and programs focus on e-waste management, sustainable packaging, water reuse, materials recycling, and industrial symbiosis.
- In global supply chains and industry transition, we aim to co-develop resilient, green industrial value chains, particularly in steel, cement, chemicals, and electronics. The 2025 joint R&D call explicitly supports transition in steel and cement through technology co-development.
- In science and space cooperation, Sweden's contribution to ISRO's Venus mission through the Venusian Neutrals Analyzer demonstrates high-end scientific collaboration at the frontier of human knowledge.

The economic story is equally strong. More than 280 Swedish companies now operate in India, employing over 220,000 people directly and supporting millions more indirectly. Bilateral trade touched nearly 7 billion dollars in 2024, and with expanding collaboration in green tech, smart infrastructure, and innovation, this is only set to grow further. The expansion of Business Sweden with its new Mumbai office is another sign of deepening engagement.

Friends, today's Innovation Day is not only a celebration but also a call to action. It is time to ensure that prototypes become large-scale solutions, that pilot projects move into industrial deployment, and that our dialogues translate into measurable, global impact. The guiding principle before us must be clear — from ideas to scale, from innovation to inclusion, and from partnership to progress.

The challenge before us is immense, but so is our collective resolve. By co-creating sustainable solutions, scaling innovation through robust partnerships, and bridging geographies with shared values, India and Sweden can offer models that inspire the world. Together, we can turn sustainability challenges into opportunities, and innovation into a force for global good.

Thank you all once again for your presence, your commitment, and your faith in this partnership. Let us work together to make India–Sweden innovation not just a blueprint for bilateral cooperation, but a beacon of hope for sustainable global growth.

Thank you.