

Talking Points

AI, Talent and Innovation: Can Sweden stay competitive without India?

Distinguished colleagues, Professor Dubhashi, Vice-Chancellor Martin Nilsson Jacobi, Ms. Noi Cecilia Oldne, Mr. Andreas Göthberg, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here at Chalmers for this important discussion on “AI, Talent and Innovation: Can Sweden stay competitive without India?”

The title itself is provocative, and perhaps intentionally so. It pushes us toward a bigger question: in a world transformed by artificial intelligence, can any country remain globally competitive in isolation?

Because the AI revolution is changing the rules of competition.

In the industrial age, countries competed for natural resources. In the digital age, they competed for capital and data. In the AI age, talent itself is becoming strategic infrastructure.

And talent is unlike oil, steel, or even data. It cannot simply be extracted or purchased. It must be educated, attracted, connected, and empowered.

Today, countries around the world are in a race—not only for AI leadership, but also for people: researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs, scientists and innovators who will shape the technologies of tomorrow.

This is where the discussion of Sweden and India becomes particularly interesting.

On the face of it, we appear very different.

Sweden is a country of roughly 10 million people, known for extraordinary innovation density and remarkable technological achievements. India is a country of more than 1.4 billion people, with immense diversity, energy and scale.

But if we look more closely, these differences are not limitations; they are complementary strengths.

Sweden consistently performs among the world's leading innovation economies. It invests around 3–3.5% of GDP in research and development—among the highest levels in Europe. Despite its size, Sweden has created globally transformative companies and technologies: Ericsson, Volvo, IKEA, Spotify, and many others.

Sweden has repeatedly demonstrated that excellence can outperform size.

India brings a different but equally important dimension.

India today is among the world's largest sources of STEM talent and one of the fastest-growing AI talent ecosystems globally. It has one of the youngest populations among major economies, with a median age around 28 years. Millions of young people are entering education and the workforce every year.

So if Sweden brings exceptional innovation capability, India brings scale.

And AI increasingly rewards both.

Because AI systems improve not only through better algorithms, but also through larger networks of people, ideas and collaboration.

In many industries we are already seeing this shift.

The old model of international cooperation often looked like this: one country designs, another executes.

But the future belongs to co-creation.

The future is not “designed here and built there.” Increasingly, it will be imagined together, researched together and developed together.

Whether in healthcare AI, climate technology, mobility, advanced manufacturing, telecommunications, or deep-tech innovation, the opportunities are immense.

This is also where institutions like Chalmers play a crucial role.

Universities today are not only centers of learning. They are becoming strategic engines of talent and innovation.

The questions for universities are therefore becoming larger and more urgent:

How do we attract the best minds from around the world?

How do we create environments where talent chooses not only to study, but also to innovate and build?

How do we connect research with entrepreneurship and industry?

And perhaps equally importantly: how do we create global partnerships that allow ideas to move across borders?

Because the future of AI is unlikely to be shaped by isolated actors.

Increasingly, innovation ecosystems will determine competitiveness.

And this brings us to the broader global context.

Artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming a strategic technology. Countries today are thinking not only about software and hardware, but also about trusted partnerships, supply chains, research networks and talent ecosystems.

At a time when many parts of the world are becoming more fragmented, partnerships based on openness, trust and shared values become even more important.

India and Sweden, despite differences in size and geography, share many important principles: openness, innovation, democratic values, and a belief that technology should improve human well-being.

This creates a strong foundation for collaboration.

So let me return to the title of our discussion.

Can Sweden stay competitive without India?

Sweden's strengths are deep and real. Sweden will continue to innovate and succeed.

But perhaps the more interesting question is not about survival.

The more important question is about leadership.

Because in the AI era, leadership will increasingly come from connecting excellence with scale, research with entrepreneurship, and talent with opportunity.

A country of 10 million and a country of 1.4 billion need not be viewed as opposites.

They can be viewed as partners.

And perhaps the most valuable AI model of the future will not simply be a language model or a machine learning model.

It may be a partnership model.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to the discussion.