

75th Independence Day

15 August 2021

Stockholm

Remarks

Ambassador Tanmaya Lal

Friends,

On this occasion, may I now add some remarks on the India Sweden engagement.

I can say that India's partnership with Sweden is clearly on the upswing.

If we look at the last six months alone, there have been several high-profile interactions. Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Löfven had a good discussion during a virtual Summit in March. This was the seventh such interaction in the last seven years. They also interacted at the India EU Summit in May.

Our Ministers of Commerce and Defence have also interacted in recent months this year. Investment decisions and R&D collaboration initiatives have continued to intensify despite Covid pandemic.

The membership of the 2019 India Sweden joint initiative on Climate Action – the Leadership Group on Industry Transition (LeadIT) continues to expand. US has also joined as a member this year.

Sweden has recently joined the International Solar Alliance, launched by India and France at the Paris COP.

A couple of weeks back an Indian Navy Ship INS Tabar paid a goodwill visit to Stockholm. In 2019 INS Tarkash had visited Karlskrona.

Friends,

Many of you may have visited the island of Birka, not far from Stockholm, an old trading port. On this island, 1,000 years old beads and crystals from India have been found in the Viking settlements on this island. On the nearby Helgö island, the site of an even older settlement, a 1,500 years old bronze statuette of Buddha was found.

These offer fascinating glimpses into the ancient long distance trading networks. Closer to present times, in the 18th century, a Swedish East India Company was setup to trade with India and beyond.

More than a century ago, in 1913, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore became the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize. A hundred years ago in 1921, he visited Stockholm and Uppsala University. Indian revolutionaries Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and Lala Har Dayal spent some years in Sweden more than a century ago.

Also almost a century ago, newly established Swedish companies such as Ericsson, Alfa Laval and Swedish Match established their presence in India. Today there are nearly 250 Swedish companies in India and around 75 Indian companies in Sweden.

Clean technology, innovation, water & waste management, circular economy, life sciences and healthcare, smart grids and smart cities are some of the areas where India and Sweden are working closely together.

A number of illustrious Indians from various fields have been awarded the Nobel Prize.

If we look beyond political and business engagement, there are extensive links in the academic and cultural fields or sports arena.

Leading Indian classical music and dance exponents have performed in Sweden.

Mrs. Lilavati Devi Häger, an Indian artiste, settled in Sweden and became India's dance ambassador here. Pandit Ravi Shankar was awarded music's most prestigious global award - the Polar Prize in 1998 in Sweden.

In recent years, some Indian movies have also been shot in Sweden, although there is a huge scope for Bollywood to look at the beautiful Swedish locations.

Many of you may also remember some memorable sporting encounters. For instance, between Bjorn Borg and Vijay Amritraj; Ramesh Krishnan or Leander Paes taking on Stefan Edberg or Mats Wilander. The legendary Prakash Padukone won the 1980 Swedish Open in Karlskrona. India and Sweden met in 1987 Davis Cup final in Gothenburg.

Motorsports and technology enthusiasts may remember that Sweden's Felix Rosenqvist drove Mahindra Racing to its first victory in Formula E Racing in Berlin four years ago.

Our young stars in Chess, Table Tennis and other sports play each other regularly at various international championships. The young Swedish wrestler Sofia Mattson played in Pro-Wrestling League in India a few years back. The Swedish Football star Freddy Ljungberg played in the Indian Super League also recently. India's Junior Women Football team is currently being coached by Thomas Dannerby from Sweden.

Indian and Swedish women players met in table tennis and wrestling at the recent Tokyo Olympics also.

And Neeraj Chopra, the first Indian to win a Gold medal in Athletics, stayed in Sweden in Uppsala for his final training and competition before leaving for Tokyo Olympics.

Friends,

I understand that there are around 50,000 Indians living in Sweden. Today, a large number of them are IT professionals, students and researchers and the Indian community is well respected.

The Indian Diaspora represents India's diversity, the spirit to live in harmony, qualities of hard work and professionalism. You represent both, the Indian civilizational heritage and the enthusiasm of modern India.

You are all Ambassadors of India.

Best Wishes to all of you.

Thank you.