

India Sweden High-Level Innovation Dialogue announces several Collaborations

The India-Sweden High Level Policy Dialogue on Innovation Policy was jointly inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India Hon'ble Narendra Modi and His Majesty, the King of Sweden Carl XVI Gustaf, on 2 December 2019, at Hyderabad House in New Delhi. The Dialogue created a platform with key stakeholders in a triple helix format from the government, private sector, and academia to provide overall strategic direction for joint innovation policy formulation. The dialogue jointly formulated and implemented short- and long-term projects in strategic areas such as, but not limited to, circular economy, digital health, artificial intelligence, sustainable energy, and future mobility.



Earlier, on 17 April 2018, India and Sweden signed a joint innovation partnership to deepen the collaboration between the two countries and contribute to sustainable growth and new job opportunities. The partnership was signed during the visit of Prime Minister of India Sh. Narendra Modi to Sweden.

It was agreed in the Joint Declaration on India-Sweden Innovation Partnership for a Sustainable Future, that both countries will explore optimizing the formal bilateral collaboration mechanisms, increase synergies between policy areas and enable the exchange of experiences and best practice regarding innovation policies for the creation of vibrant joint innovation ecosystems.

The Dialogue brought together government officials, prominent industrialists as well as renowned academicians from both Sweden and India. Minister Ibrahim Baylan, Minister for Business, Industry and Innovation and Dr Harsh Vardhan, Minister for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, Health and Family Welfare were also present for the dialogue.

Innovation cooperation is the fastest growing element in the bilateral relationship between India and Sweden. The partnership is based on the principles of co-funding, co-development, and co-creation, towards mutual benefits, making full use of Sweden and India's complementary strengths. Looking forward, both sides discussed opportunities for new bilateral cooperation on shared strategic priorities such as future mobility, circular economy, and digital health.

The major announcement made during the dialogue was the Agri-Waste to High Energy Bio-coal – A pilot established under the PM-STIAC Waste to Wealth Mission. The Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, in partnership with Bioendev, Sweden, has set up a torrefaction pilot plant for the conversion of agri-waste into bio-coal at National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute in Punjab. This Bio-coal, made from unutilised crop waste, produces 20 times lower emissions than conventional coal. Expected outcomes of this pilot study are:

- Improved air quality with reduction of crop burning
- Reduced emissions from the use of bio-coal as a clean energy source
- Livelihood generation opportunities for farmers as bio-coal production creates new market linkages for agri-waste
- Bio-coal can be used as a clean energy input source in thermal power plants as well as in households
- Capacity building through technology development and employment generation
- Soil quality improvement in fields from avoided crop burning

Other major announcements made during the dialogue were about the following:

- The India-Sweden Collaborative Industrial Research & Development Programme in area of ‘smart cities and clean technologies’ and ‘Digitization and Internet of Things’ co-funded by Department of Science & Technology (DST), India and Vinnova, the Swedish Innovation Agency. The project aims to develop technologies that can be commercialized after two years through cooperation between India and Sweden. Vinnova will provide funding to Swedish side participants up to 250000 EUR as a grant. On the Indian side, the conditional grant of up to 50% with a limit of INR 1.5 crores per project to Indian project partners to be provided.
- Department of Science & Technology (DST), India, and Swedish Research Council will fund twenty bilateral projects in the area of Computer Science and Material Science under the Indo-Swedish Joint Network Grant Awards. Swedish Research Council will fund 1,4 million EUR for two years for this program. Department of Science and Technology (DST) will provide activity matching funding to the Indian counterparts.
- Through the Strategic Indo-Swedish Cooperative Innovation Programme, Department of Biotechnology (DBT), India, and Vinnova will announce a joint program in the area of ‘digital health.’ The program aims to provide scalable and implementable innovative, sustainable and flexible health solutions in both countries using artificial intelligence-based technologies as a tool.
- India-Swedish Collaborative Industrial Research & Development Programme in the area of ‘Smart Grids’ co-funded by Department of Science & Technology (DST), India and Swedish Energy Agency was announced. Swedish Energy Agency has allocated 2,5 million EUR over the next four years for this industry-led call.
- The establishment of the new ‘Joint Centre of Excellence in Innovation and Entrepreneurship’ between KTH Royal Institute of Technology and IIT Madras. The centre in Chennai is the first of four planned centres. The joint centre aims to build an entrepreneurial spirit and cross-border teams creating innovations that could target the markets in both Sweden and India, as well as globally.
- The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), India, and the Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden agreed on an MoU on cooperation in Polar Science. The two ministries are committed to cooperate in the study of polar research by coordinating and sharing resources and data.