

## India, Sweden agree upon 'win-win' joint action plan

New horizons: Ruchi Ghanashyam, Secretary (West), External Affairs Ministry, and Sweden's Minister Mikael Damberg after signing the Innovation and Partnership Agreement. AFP

After a hectic day of bilateral parleys here, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Swedish counterpart, Stefan Löfven, on Tuesday agreed upon a joint action plan (JAP) for both countries to take forward a wide range of initiatives in defence, trade and investment, counterterrorism, renewable energy, smart cities, women's skill development, space and science and healthcare.

Characterising the JAP as a "win-win partnership" for New Delhi and Stockholm, Mr. Modi underscored the critical role of the defence sector and security initiatives as a pillar of the bilateral relationship.

"Sweden has been partner of India in the defence sector for a long time. I am confident that new opportunities for cooperation in this sector will arise in the future, especially in defence production," he said.

The bilateral summit here was additionally significant for the opportunity it afforded both sides to discuss Sweden's interest in proposing the Saab Group's Gripen-E single-engine jet fighter for the Indian Air Force, as a Request for Information had been issued earlier this month to Stockholm.

On counterterrorism, Mr. Modi and Mr. Löfven emphasised that the global counterterrorism legal framework should be regularly updated to address the changing threat of terrorism with strength.

Innovation was front and centre in the bilateral summit today, with a separate discussion focused entirely on this area, and the outcome being a joint declaration on a Sweden-India Innovation Partnership for a Sustainable Future, which built upon the joint statement between the two Prime Ministers in Mumbai in 2016. Additionally a major funding boost was injected into the bilateral process when Mr. Löfven announced that "The Swedish government will kick start our Innovation Partnership by providing up to 50 million Swedish kronor (over \$59 million) for innovation cooperation in the field of smart cities and sustainability."

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