

# INDIA, SWEDEN TO SIGN MOU FOR POLAR SCIENCE COOPERATION

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Europe, European Union (EU) and India

Klas Molin

India and Sweden are likely to sign their first maritime cooperation agreement, Cooperation in Polar Science, during the visit to India of the Swedish royal couple and senior Ministers, including Foreign Minister Anne Linde.

“We have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that is being prepared, its both Arctic and Antarctic, so we call it Polar encompassing both... It has been in the works for some time. We have a tentative agreement,” Swedish Ambassador to India Klas Molin told *The Hindu*, ahead of the visit of King Carl Gustaf and Queen Silvia.

In the past few years, India has signed a series of maritime information exchange as well as military logistics support agreements, extending the reach of its armed forces. The pact with Russia, in advanced stages of discussion, will give India access to Russian bases in the Arctic for logistics and operational turnaround. However, the agreement with Sweden is scientific in nature.

Mr. Molin said the Swedish government made it clear that it saw defence as one important area “continually” between the two countries and the Swedish government was “behind SaaB’s efforts” to pitch its Gripen fighter for the Indian Air Force’s tender for 114 jets. The company remains very interested, he said, adding, “We are waiting to hear from the Indian authorities on the next step.”

Asked whether Sweden had spoken to the U.S. about the tender to avoid problems in future as the Gripen is powered by an American engine and has other U.S.-origin components, Mr. Molin said, “There is no such issue.”

## Approvals needed

Observing that any aircraft today anywhere has components from different countries, he said his take was that SaaB had offered to be a partner and obviously, the approvals needed, in this case from the American partners, “have been discussed and acquired, otherwise they wouldn’t be a contender”.

U.S. companies Boeing and Lockheed Martin are also in the race with their F-18 and F-16 fighter jets.

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