

**Indian Sweden Business Leaders Roundtable (ISBLRT)
Meeting of the Swedish Members**

31 August 2021
Stockholm

**Remarks
Ambassador Tanmaya Lal**

- Hon'ble Minister
Ambassador Klas Molin
Mr. Wallenberg
Distinguished members of ISBLRT
- I thank you for inviting me to join you today. This beautiful ship provides a wonderful setting and context for this event.
- A physical interaction after this long and difficult period is very welcome.
- The **Covid situation has improved significantly** in most parts of the world
Vaccination is well underway and
International travel seems to be resuming gradually
- **Like many countries, India suffered** a serious Covid wave some months back.
The **scale of the challenge was unprecedented**.
Lot of work is underway to scale up essential infrastructure to manage any future contingencies.
- The **availability of vaccines in India** has increased substantially. Last week, we crossed the **600 million** mark of vaccine doses administered. On some days, the vaccination rate is touching **8.5 million** in a single day.
- **Work** has resumed. Fresh **hirings** are being done. **Schools** are being reopened.
- Thankfully, it appears that setback to economy from the second wave is much less than what may have been feared.
- Various economic parameters in India are quite encouraging.
- **Economic recovery in the Second Quarter** of 2021 is around 20%, even if from a lower base. The forecast for **GDP** growth for 2021/22 at this stage is around 10%.
- **Exports** grew by around 200% in April and around 50% in July.
- **Bank Credit** is expanding. **Foreign Exchange reserves** are around USD 650 billion.
- **Infrastructure and Industrial manufacturing** are showing good recovery.
- Especially in construction and engineering, and renewable energy, steel, pharmaceuticals, specialty chemicals. Retail auto sales are also up.
- Companies are investing in improving **productivity**, and use of **digitalization**.

- There is a great **acceleration of government expenditure**, especially the **National Infrastructure Pipelines**.
- Progress is visible in **Energy Market regulation, Digital Identity Management**, implementation of a single **GST** tax. Several sectors including **defence** and **space** have been opened up.
- Sectors such as **Geospatial Data acquisition and services** and **Drone operations** have been liberalized.
- There is now clear focus on **Manufacturing**.
- To achieve this, **Infrastructure, Ease of Doing Business, Taxation, Labour Laws**, other **Production Linked Incentives** are being prioritized.
- Last month, parliament passed a bill to repeal the 2012 **Retrospective Taxation** regulation.
- Prime Minister Modi, in his Independence Day speech two weeks ago, talked about several significant initiatives for instance, a **USD 1 trillion investment plan for infrastructure** - for highways, railways, ports etc.
- He also announced a major **National Hydrogen Mission** for energy self-reliance and clean energy transition by making India a hub for Hydrogen production and exports.
- The number of **Unicorns** continues to grow in India despite pandemic, reflecting the fast-improving startup and innovation ecosystem.
- In the context of **India-Sweden**, it is encouraging to see that our leaders have had two interactions in recent months, including one at the India EU Summit. Ministers of Trade and Defence have also interacted.
- The resumption of negotiations on an **India EU Trade Agreement** is also encouraging. We hope this can make progress quickly.
- We are also looking forward to the **next Joint Economic Commission** meeting at an early date.
- We had an interesting virtual session on **Engaging India during the Almedalen Week**.
- We are now preparing for the **Innovation Day in October**. We are grateful to Hon'ble Minister for agreeing to address the event.
- We work very closely with our Swedish colleagues, especially **Ambassador Klas Molin** and his colleagues at the Swedish Embassy. This has been really helpful.
- I look forward to learning from all of you about the prospects for further business, investment, and technology linkages.

Thank You

