

Saab bets on India



The Swedish defence firm hopes a marquee deal to locally produce new-generation Gripen fighters in India will secure a sustainable future for the company. Angad Singh reports from Sweden.

Air power and industrial power are two sides of the same coin, according to Mats Palmberg, VP Industrial Partnerships, at Saab's Aeronautics business area. Saab has a specific approach to delivering 'air power,' and it is banking on this to secure orders from the Indian government to build its new Gripen E multirole fighter in large numbers in India. There are three "cornerstones" to Saab's offer for India – sovereignty, independence, and sustainment – or "protecting your nation, on your own terms," says Palmberg.

Saab's "willingness to share" is at the core of these elements, and Palmberg is keen "to link the two countries to create a relationship that goes beyond buyer-seller or even industrial cooperation." Echoing statements made earlier by Saab India head Jan Widerström, Palmberg reiterates a now-common Saab talking point – the company wants to be here (in India) "for the next 100 years." A massive Gripen order, leading to the type forming backbone of the IAF's light fighter force, would open the door to the sort of sustained technical-industrial

cooperation that could see this century-long ambition become a reality.

This plan to link the two countries and "create a relationship that goes beyond buyer-seller or even industrial cooperation" has already seen some groundwork laid with Saab's significant footprint in India. Palmberg pointed out that Tech Mahindra in Hyderabad have contributed to the development effort for the Gripen E. Saab is also working closely with a number of Indian industrial houses such as the Kalyani Group and Tata Sons.