

## Taiwan an example for region: US official

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President Tsai Ing-wen, right, is accompanied by Alex Wong, deputy assistant secretary in the US Department of State's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs yesterday as she speaks at a banquet hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei.

**Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times**

The nation's democracy and resulting development are an example for the Indo-Pacific region, a visiting US Department of State official said yesterday as he reiterated Washington's commitment to supporting Taiwan's international participation and helping it defend its democracy.

Alex Wong (王曉), deputy assistant secretary at the department's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, made the remarks in a speech at the 50th annual Hsieh Nien Fan (謝年) banquet hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in Taipei.

It was the only public appearance Wong is expected to make during his three-day visit, the first by a US official since Washington on Friday last week enacted the Taiwan Travel Act, which encourages high-level visits by Taiwanese and US officials.

However, the American Institute in Taiwan has denied a link between Wong's visit and the new legislation, a stance echoed last night by AmCham Taipei chairman Albert Chang (張國良), who said that they were classmates at Harvard Law School and that he agreed to visit months ago.

"Tonight should be about looking forward. Yes, we have done much to deepen US-Taiwan relations, but my message tonight is this: Let's do more," Wong said.

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Taiwan's constitutional democracy is an example for the entire Indo-Pacific region, because dynamic, broad-based and sustainable economic growth can only arise in the stable and certain conditions created under a constitutional government, Wong said.

"For that example to have the most force, for that example to do the most good, Taiwan can no longer be excluded unjustly from international fora," Wong said.

Denying Taiwan the chance to share its experiences in public health, humanitarian relief and sustainable development would be unjust for anyone who could benefit from them, Wong said, pledging continued joint efforts between the US government and private sector to ensure that "Taiwan's stellar international example shines brightly."

Wong also lauded Taiwan's efforts to forge close economic ties with nations throughout the Indo-Pacific region via the New Southbound Policy, which he said is vital to consolidating the free and open rules-based order in the region.

"The final thing I am certain of is the US' support for Taiwan," Wong said, adding that Washington would continue to bolster Taiwan's ability to defend its democracy and ensure that its people can travel on their chosen path free from coercion.

In her opening remarks, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) had a light-hearted exchange with Wong, when she jokingly said she was "allergic" to Harvard Law School because she was not admitted.

Tsai then expressed her gratitude to US President Donald Trump's administration and the US Congress for supporting the act.

"We also welcome deputy assistant secretary Wong as the latest to be here following visits by senior US officials at the state department, department of commerce, small business administrations and more," she said.

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