

Indian lawmaker Sujeet Kumar said he believes New Delhi should step up its political engagement with Taiwan, including through mutual visits by parliamentary delegations, to counter China's "bullying" behavior.

Kumar, a member of the Biju Janata Dal party representing the eastern state of Odisha in the Rajya Sabha, India's upper house of parliament, arrived in Taiwan on Sunday for a 10-day visit.

He is scheduled to deliver a speech at the Yushan Forum, meet with President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳敦義), and visit several think tanks, business groups and universities.



Indian lawmaker Sujeet Kumar smiles during a media interview in India on Saturday.

Photo: CNA

In a media interview before leaving India for Taiwan, Kumar said he believes there is "immense potential" for developing Taiwan-India relations in the areas of trade, investment and tourism, as well as through educational and political exchanges.

"I think it's necessary that the two countries come together, because we are both proud democracies. India is the largest democracy in the world, and Taiwan, [while] being a small nation, is a successful democracy," he said.

He said that he plans to use the visit to explore the possibility of a free-trade agreement with Taiwan.

Indian lawmaker says Taiwan ties must be bolstered

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“In India, we are really hopeful that the Taiwanese semiconductor industry will look at India as a destination,” particularly as countries try to diversify their supply chains away from China, Kumar said.

Meanwhile, Taiwanese can learn from India’s successful service industry, and should also consider visiting the country as tourists, given its status as “the cradle of Buddhism,” he said.

In addition to building social and economic ties, Taiwan and India need to become closer politically, as both have relationships with China in which Beijing acts as “the aggressor,” whether it be in the Taiwan Strait or along the Line of Actual Control that serves as India and China’s de facto border, Kumar said.

While acknowledging that the Indian government might have reasons for adhering to a “one China” policy, Kumar said he does not believe that Taiwan or Tibet are a part of China.

Rather, it might be time for India’s government to “rethink its ‘one China’ policy,” and make clear that “China is a bully” which, if tolerated, would only act more aggressively, he said.

Kumar, elected to parliament in 2020, is also a cofounder of Formosa Club Indo-Pacific, a platform for international lawmakers working to enhance relations with Taiwan and help it connect with the world.

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