

PM Modi's social media diplomacy can help ties: China daily

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Beijing: A leading English daily of China on Monday lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomatic initiatives via social media, saying that it will "play a constructive role in the relationship between India and China".

"When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on his 60th birthday on his Sina Weibo account on Wednesday (July 1), he once again showed the high value he attaches to diplomacy through social media accounts," the Global Times stated in an opinion piece headlined "Modi's social-media diplomacy can help build Sino-Indian understanding".

The article is based on an interview with Zhao Gancheng, director of South Asia Studies at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies.

Noting that Modi's account in Sina Weibao, the Chinese version of Twitter, has tens of thousands of followers, it stated: "Yet this is not a special move, for he did the similar things for the US, Russia and Japan, through which he has delivered a message to the world that India is more open, and is keeping up to date with the latest trends."

According to Zhao, despite India being the largest democracy in the world, there is an impression that it is a "rather conservative nation" and negative news about the country emerge from time to time.

"Therefore, Modi is trying to provide a new perspective on India to the international community through his public diplomacy. Communicating to people abroad is one part of this," the article stated.

"Such public diplomacy will also play a constructive role in the relationship between India and China."

According to the South Asian affairs expert, although there are currently no huge irritants affecting bilateral ties, there has been no major progress either in recent years.

"Besides, while certain difficult issues remain unsettled, it is still an open question as to when the two countries will completely settle on the track of healthy cooperation, especially with the backdrop of border disputes," the article stated.

According to Zhao, the people of the two countries do not see each other as friends.

"Some Indians consider China to be their biggest threat, while some Chinese also view India negatively," the opinion piece stated.

"In this case, Modi's Weibo account and his interactions with Chinese people can have a positive effect on bilateral relations."

Zhao opined that through Modi's kind of public diplomacy, "people from each side can raise their understanding of one another, which will, in turn, play a significant role in enhancing Sino-Indian ties".

"Of course, thorny issues need to be resolved through negotiations by leaders from both countries. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that if more Chinese look favourably on India, a relaxed atmosphere for smooth and healthy bilateral relations will be created," the Global Times article concluded.

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