

Beijing reiterates call for Hong Kong to prioritise national security, patriotic education

Friday 1 November 2019, by [AFP](#), [JUN Mai](#), [LO Kinling](#) (Date first published: 1 November 2019).

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<https://www.scmp.com/print/news/china/diplomacy/article/3035913/beijing-reiterates-call-hong-kong-prioritise-national-security>

by Kinling Lo & Jun Mai (SCMP)

Beijing will continue to implement “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong and Macau, and will call on them to prioritise the central government’s authority and boost efforts to safeguard national security, a senior ranking official of China’s top legislature said on Friday 1.

Shen Chunyao, head of the National People’s Congress’ committees overseeing the Basic Law [1] – or mini-constitutions – of the two semi-autonomous cities, spoke about Beijing’s position at a press conference in the capital that followed Thursday’s conclusion of a key Communist Party meeting.

At that meeting, or plenum, party leaders issued a communique highlighting the importance of the “one country, two systems” principle for governing Hong Kong and Macau, its two special administrative regions, and of safeguarding national security in the two cities.

The reference to national security came with Hong Kong having been the scene of over four months of protests triggered by a now-withdrawn extradition bill [2] that would have allowed the transfer of criminal suspects to the mainland, among other jurisdictions.

Here are the takeaways from the press conference:

On one country, two systems

Shen confirmed that implementing one country, two systems – under which Hong Kong and Macau became part of China but retained certain freedoms – was a key discussion item at the meeting, whose agenda was focused on enhancing the Communist Party’s governance.

“Ruling Hong Kong and Macau under the one country, two systems policy is a key component of the governance system of our country and it was an important item for discussion at the plenum,” Shen

said.

The meeting had formulated “specific tasks and arrangements” concerning one country, two systems, Shen said, emphasising that the success of the concept in Hong Kong must closely follow the principles of “high degree of autonomy” and “Hong Kong governed by Hong Kong people”. But he added: “We must uphold the principle that ‘one country’ is the top priority and the foundation for the implementation of ‘two systems’, and ‘two systems’ must belong to and come under ‘one country’ and be unified within ‘one country’.”

On Beijing’s authority over its special administrative regions (SAR)

Shen said Beijing had authority over the SARs of Hong Kong and Macau, especially over appointment of principal officials and the interpretation of each SAR’s Basic Law.

“The plenum has made the decision that we must enhance the system and mechanism over the appointment of the chief executive and principal officials in the special administrative regions, and the system over the interpretation of the Basic Law by the National People’s Congress, enabling the central government to exercise its authority as stipulated in the constitution and the Basic Law,” he said.

On national security

Shen said the meeting had decided the SARs must strengthen their law enforcement capabilities. *“[We will] establish a sound legal system and enforcement mechanism for the safeguarding of national security in the special administrative regions, and support the special administrative regions in strengthening law enforcement,”* he said.

On stepping up ‘patriotic education’

Shen stressed the importance of stepping up so-called patriotic education in Hong Kong and Macau, especially among civil servants and young people.

“[We will] strengthen national education of Hong Kong and Macau people, especially civil servants and youth, including education of the constitution and the Basic Law, Chinese history and culture, in order to boost their national consciousness and patriotic spirit,” he said.

On integration with China’s economy

Shen reiterated that Beijing would continue to support Hong Kong and Macau to play a role in China’s economic development, especially in the Greater Bay Area.

“[We] support Hong Kong and Macau to develop their economy and improve people’s livelihood, and make greater efforts in resolving deep-rooted problems that affect social stability and long-term development,” he said.

On China’s broader economy

Also in the press conference, Han Wenxiu, deputy director of the Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission, sought to address concerns on China’s slowing economic growth, reform of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and the challenges posed by the trade war [4] with the United States.

“SOEs don’t have a natural advantage; in a market system there has to be a ‘winner takes all’, it’s the same in China as it is overseas,” he said.

“China will allow more foreign capital to invest in industries including manufacturing, service,

agriculture, finance, telecom, education and medical sectors,” Han said, pledging that China’s economy would continue to open up – a demand from Washington, with US President Donald Trump accusing China of unfair market competition with strict controls on foreign investment. “We will allow more foreign capital holding, or sole proprietorship for foreign companies,” Han said.

Additional reporting by Teddy Ng and Albert Han

Links

[1] <https://www.scmp.com/topics/basic-law-1>

[2] <https://www.scmp.com/topics/hong-kong-extradition-bill>

[3] <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1032535/protest-against-national-education-end-after-government-climbdown>

[4] <https://www.scmp.com/topics/us-china-trade-war>

China says will ‘improve’ way Hong Kong leader is selected to ‘safeguard national security’

AFP

<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/11/01/china-says-will-improve-way-hong-kong-leader-selected-safeguard-national-security/>

China warned Friday it would not tolerate any challenge to Hong Kong’s governing system, as it laid out plans to boost patriotism in the city and change how its leader is chosen or removed after months of pro-democracy protests.

The unrest in the semi-autonomous city was an important topic at a major, four-day meeting of the Communist Party chaired by President Xi Jinping this week in Beijing, said Shen Chunyao, director of the Hong Kong, Macau and Basic Law Commission.

The central government in Beijing has so far voiced its confidence in Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam and the city police to put a lid on the increasingly violent protests.

But all eyes have been on whether the party leadership will assert more control over the situation if the demonstrations spin out of control.

The former British colony has been rocked by months of protests with citizens lampooning the city’s pro-Beijing leaders and erosion on basic rights.

Shen said party leaders agreed to “further improve the central government’s system of governance over the region” and maintain its “long-term prosperity and stability.”

China, he added, will “*never tolerate any act that challenges the bottom line of ‘one country, two systems’, never tolerate any act that splits the country and endangers national security, and resolutely prevent and contain foreign forces’ interference in Hong Kong and Macau business.*”

Hong Kong’s chief executive is not directly elected, a source of major friction and a headache for the leaders themselves because they have no popular mandate.

Currently the city’s leader is chosen by a 1,200-strong committee that is stacked with Beijing loyalists.

Lam, who now boasts record low approval ratings, became leader in 2016 after securing 777 votes from that committee.

Shen said the party leaders discussed ways *“to improve the mechanism of appointing and removing the chief executive and key officials of the Special Administrative Region by the central government.”*

The legal system of the city will also be improved to “safeguard national security,” he said, without providing more details.

The party elite have decided to step up patriotic education as a way to curb youth-led protests.

“We should educate Hong Kong and Macau society, especially public officials and teenagers, about the constitution... and strengthen the national consciousness and patriotism of Hong Kong and Macau compatriots through the education of history and Chinese culture,” said Shen.