

Top Chinese official praises Macau, warns Hong Kong to toe state constitutional line

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Communist Party's No 3 leader says Hong Kong must heed the central government's policies. Li Zhanshu's hardline rhetoric signals that last month's district council elections have not swayed Beijing from its plans for the two cities.

Beijing's long-term strategy for Hong Kong and Macau

The head of China's legislature has warned Hong Kong to pay heed to the central government's paramount power, using the 20th anniversary of Macau [1]'s Basic Law to become **the first senior state leader to detail Beijing's strategy** for the two cities since Hong Kong's district council elections.

The remarks indicated that **the landslide defeat of pro-Beijing candidates [2] in last month's elections had not altered Beijing's long-term thinking** about the two special administrative regions, an analyst said.

At the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday, **Li Zhanshu [3], third in the Communist Party hierarchy**, diverted from prepared remarks on Macau to make a direct point about Hong Kong.

*"I mostly talked about Macau today. But **Hong Kong also needs to pay heed to the central government's policies**, the constitution, and the relation between [the central government's] comprehensive jurisdiction over [Hong Kong and Macau] and their high degree of autonomy," Li said.*

"The central government has the same demands for both Hong Kong and Macau."

The event was attended by various academics advising Beijing and officials from Macau, as well as Vice-Premier Han Zheng [4], the top party member overseeing Hong Kong and Macau affairs.

The comments came

- **about a week after pro-democracy candidates won an overwhelming majority** of seats in Hong Kong's district council elections

- **and after months of anti-government protests [5]** in the city.

The protests - sparked by a now-withdrawn extradition bill that would have allowed suspects to be sent to mainland China - expanded to include other political demands, including universal suffrage to elect the city's leader.

They also grew more violent, prompting the city government to use its emergency authority from a colonial era law to introduce a mask ban [7].

But last month the city's High Court ruled that the ban violated Hong Kong's Basic Law, a decision that drew strong criticism from the Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress, over which Li presides.

On Tuesday 3, Li called Macau a successful example of *"one country, two systems"*, and urged Hong Kong to follow the same path, saying that the legal and constitutional systems in the special administrative regions *"could not be [treated] outside the national constitution"*.

"The successful implementation of Macau's Basic Law has proved that one country, two systems is the best solution to solve the history problem of Macau," he said, referring to the constitutional principle under which Hong Kong and Macau retain their own political, legal, economic and financial systems.

"There is no so-called constitutional system outside [China's] constitution, nor a so-called rule of law outside [China's] constitution."

Li also praised Macau for its deep-rooted patriotism as well as the occupation of key government positions by patriots, saying these were some of the main reasons for the city's success in implementing one country, two systems.

- **He called on civil servants to strengthen their understanding of the Basic Law and the country's constitution**, adding that it should be part of their performance appraisals and recruitment.

- **Patriotic education for young people should also start in school**, Li said.

The points of view of Gu Su, and Johnny Lau Yui-siu

- But Gu Su, a professor of philosophy and law at Nanjing University, said **it would be extremely difficult to govern Hong Kong in the same way as Macau**.

"There is no obvious opposition in Macau, and it is neither a commercial hub nor an international finance centre," Gu said.

"Governing Hong Kong would need more wisdom and wiser policies."

- Political commentator Johnny Lau Yui-siu said Li's speech showed that **Beijing's tough stand on Hong Kong was not affected by the pro- establishment's rout in the election**.

"Beijing is sticking to its hardline approach towards Hong Kong and is not ready to make major concessions to Hongkongers' demands," Lau said.

He said Beijing wanted Hong Kong to follow Macau's example in safeguarding national security and upholding the central government's authority.

"Obviously, Beijing feels Hong Kong has failed to implement one country, two systems in the way it wants," he said.

Additional reporting by Echo Xie and Gary Cheung

Links

[1] <https://www.scmp.com/topics/macau-0>

[2] <https://www.scmp.com/topics/hong-kong-district-council-elections>

[3] <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2116576/li-zhanshu-key-aide-chinas-xi-jinping-vaults-top>

[4] <https://www.scmp.com/topics/han-zheng>

[5] <https://www.scmp.com/topics/hong-kong-protests>

[6] <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3037606/china-updates-patriotic-education-push-forge-stronger-national>

[7] <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3039657/hong-kong-government-gets-more-time-prepare-case>

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

P.S.

<https://scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3040392/top-chinese-official-praises-macau-warns-hong-kong-toe-state>