

Speech by SJ at Hong Kong Academy of Politics and Public Policy Graduation  
Ceremony 2024-2025 (English only) (with photo)

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Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the Hong Kong Academy of Politics and Public Policy Graduation Ceremony 2024-2025 today (August 2):

Mr Tong (Patron of the Hong Kong Academy of Politics and Public Policy and Convenor of the Path of Democracy, Mr Ronny Tong), dear professors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I must begin by extending my warmest congratulations to all the graduates on your very remarkable achievements. Today marks a milestone in your journey to become the future leaders of Hong Kong.

I have done some research about this programme. Since its inception in 2017, the Senior Executive Diploma in Political Leadership Programme has trained over 200 people. The programme's strength lies in, first, its very strong partnership with HKU SPACE; second, its very well-structured course modules coupled with field trips, and thirdly, which is the most important, the support given by very eminent lecturers who are leading experts in different areas. This year, I note that a 20-hour programme called the "Premier Programme in Leadership and Public Affairs" has been introduced, which aims at cultivating the core skills of politicians such as policy research and public speaking. These two programmes, in my view, have undoubtedly contributed to improving the quality of our future politicians.

What I wish to say is that for anyone who is interested in taking part in politics, I think it also applies to in devising or implementing public policy in Hong Kong, the most important task is to have a very proper and thorough understanding of the fundamental principle of "one country, two systems". This is of course a very big issue that I cannot cover in two minutes. But I just wish to repeat one of my favorite quotes concerning the principle of "one country, two systems". That is what President Xi Jinping said on December 20, 2024 in Macao: "The values embodied in the cause of 'one country, two systems', namely, peace, inclusiveness, openness and sharing, are relevant to not only China but also the whole world. These values should be cherished by us all." This important point is of particular relevance and significance to Hong Kong having regard to our city's status as an international cosmopolitan city. In making public policies for Hong Kong, we must do our best to uphold the four values highlighted by President Xi both as a matter of perception and reality.

I wish to echo what Ronny has said. Ronny referred to his experience yesterday when a child asked him about the future of Hong Kong and Ronny's answer was "one country, two systems". For the future, I think nobody has a crystal ball, but I do feel that the future is very much in our hands. The question is whether we can make the best use of various systematic advantages that are offered by "one country, two systems". I think that's why

Ronny emphasised that we do have to firstly identify exactly what the differences are; secondly, to make those differences count, and thirdly, make those differences visible. Based on the personal experience including my very recent trip to Europe, many of you would probably know that I went to visit the Netherlands, Paris and Rome, I tried to tell a Hong Kong story, which is a good story and a true story. I think this is an important point. It cannot just be a good story. It has to base on true facts. But the challenge is that, for various reasons, there may be a chance to blur the distinction between the "two systems", so that our systematic advantages which are really the differences between the "two systems" become less visible and people simply do not see the differences or our systematic advantages very clearly, and they cannot figure out how these differences can serve not just the interest of Hong Kong but also China. But more importantly, it's in the interest of the world community to allow Hong Kong to be in the position to implement "one country, two systems" successfully. I think that's why President Xi Jinping said in Macao that "one country, two systems" is not just for Hong Kong, it's not even just for China. It's a sort of universal product in the hope of serving the interests of friends around the world. If we want to maintain our status as an international trading centre, financial centre, aviation centre, then we must convince people around the world that we are not serving our own self-interest, but our common interests.

Turning to politics, I remember a speaker said that not many people wish to become politicians. I do have to confess that my experience in politics is still very limited. Some people say that politics is the art of compromise. I think that's true, but unfortunately, sometimes, people misunderstand or misconstrue compromise as a sign of weakness or indecisiveness. I prefer to describe it in a different way. I would say politics is the art of balance. The analogy that I would like to draw is very much like walking on a tightrope. Firstly, you have to be very brave as there is always the risk of falling which can be fatal. So you have to think very carefully before you walk on the tightrope. Second, you really have to be very patient and take one-step at a time. Sometimes, when the wind is very strong, you have to slow down, and sometimes you have to pause. Most importantly, it is inevitable that you will wobble while moving forward. The key is to ensure that you will not lean too much to one side, so that it becomes impossible to restore the balance.

When it comes to the making of public policies, whether in the public sector or private sector, it's always about how to strike the balance between various considerations and to make sure that we're not going too far to one extreme. You can never achieve the most upright position, but you have to try to ensure that you're not swaying too much to one side.

One of the speakers also said that he envied you. I share the same feeling. I do envy you because I did not have the chance of receiving all the good trainings that you have received before I took up my present position. Precisely because of this reason, I'm very confident that all of you are now in a very good position. You are now well prepared to take up the position of being the future leaders of Hong Kong. I read your website, there is a question of how can we make a difference in Hong Kong? I think that's the motto. My answer is that I'm sure that you can all definitely make a difference in Hong Kong.

To conclude, I wish to express my congratulations to you again. Let's work together for a better Hong Kong. The future is in our hands, all we need is confidence and good judgement. Thank you very much.

Ends/Saturday, August 2, 2025