

## Former chairman of Hong Kong's biggest pro-establishment party says election humiliation was 'not a bad thing'



The humiliating defeat of Hong Kong's largest pro-establishment party in the district council elections was "not a bad thing", its former chairman said.

Rather it was a reminder that party members have to fight as hard as their founders did 20 years ago.

Jasper Tsang Yok-sing gave his advice to fellow party members at the CityVoice seminar on Saturday, after the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) suffered its largest defeat, winning 21 seats, down from the 119 seats in the previous election. In contrast, the pro-democracy camp gained unprecedented control of 17 of the 18 district councils in the city.

At the forum on Hong Kong's future, the former Legislative Council president said he was not worried about the loss, but instead hinted the party which once held more seats than all its rivals had forgotten the hard-fought battle when it was first established in 1992.

"When we first established DAB, we put on a hard fight in every seat. Defeat was expected, and victory was taken as a pleasant surprise," Tsang said. "There's no other way, but win voters' support."

SCMP

HongKong Politics 2019/11/30

The DAB founding chairman said he and his peers fought hard in different polls in the 1990s, as Hongkongers lost confidence in pro-Beijing politicians after the Tiananmen crackdown in Beijing in 1989. The party eventually made some major advances in the legislature in 1998.

But, he also said the entire pro-establishment bloc had won a roughly 40 per cent of share of votes in last weekend's elections, and their supporters would be watching how the pan-democrats performed.

"The non-establishment camp is now under the watch of not just from the pro-establishment-turned-opposition, but first and foremost of the voters," he said.

Pro-democracy lawmakers' convenor and Civic Party lawmaker Tanya Chan, who spoke at a parallel session at the same event, hoped her camp would seize the chance and treat the district councils as a "testing ground" for them to govern the city.

Chan's own party won 32 seats in the election, becoming the second largest party at the district level.

"We have talked about the principle of Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong," she said. "Maybe we start within districts, by empowering the supposedly consultative councils and driving for some changes in the system."

She urged all pan-democrats to think about the way forward, how to use the power and resources at their disposal, and to "realise our ideal".

Chan said her party had considered pushing for changes in the declaration of interests system, and to the rules of procedure for council meetings.

Legal scholar Albert Chen Hung-yee of the University of Hong Kong, speaking during Chan's session, said many had doubts over the future of "one country, two systems" amid the ongoing political crisis.

The member of the Basic Law Committee, which advises the national legislature's top body, pointed out that the "deep-seated conflict" of the ruling principle was the confrontation between "two systems" in the political and cultural sense, as opposed to problems in livelihood issues often cited by the state media and the pro-Beijing bloc.

"The mainland has been running an authoritarian system, while the system in Hong Kong is considered on a par with the western world," he said.

He believed the only way out was both sides building mutual respect and narrowing their differences through dialogue.