

City's largest-ever delegation to Victory Day military parade includes state leader Leung Chun-ying and a war veteran, 94-year-old Law King-fai

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu has led 360 representatives from Hong Kong – the city's largest-ever delegation – to attend a military parade in Beijing to mark China's victory over Japan in World War II, while other senior officials, students and residents observed commemorative events held locally.

The parade also saw former city leader Leung Chun-ying seated at the main podium of Tiananmen Square's gate tower. Leung, a state leader, now serves as a vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the country's top political advisory body.

Held along Changan Avenue in central Beijing, the parade on Wednesday morning, among several events to mark the 80th anniversary of Victory Day, lasted around 90 minutes.

Before the parade started, President Xi Jinping and leaders of other countries, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, shook hands with six Chinese veterans, including 94-year-old Law King-fai from Hong Kong.

Law was part of the Hong Kong Independent Battalion, a guerrilla force, during the war.

Chief Executive Lee, Hong Kong Legislative Council president Andrew Leung Kwan-yuen, and Starry Lee Wai-king, the city's sole representative on the National People's Congress Standing Committee, China's top legislative body, were seen standing together on the far side of the tower watching the parade.

Posting on social media after the parade, John Lee expressed excitement at the first parade held by the country since it embarked on a new journey of advancing Chinese-style modernisation.

"This fully demonstrates our military's powerful capabilities to defend national sovereignty, security and development interests, as well as to maintain world peace," he wrote.

The city leader also expressed gratitude for Beijing's high regard as the Hong Kong delegation made up a significant proportion of spectators at the parade. Watching the parade would greatly enhance

Hongkongers' determination to protect their homeland and strengthen their sense of national pride, he noted.

"I encourage Hong Kong residents to develop a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of this indelible shared memory of the Chinese nation, to remember the peace forged through sacrifices of our martyrs, and cherish the peaceful times," he said.

"Let us make an even greater Hong Kong contribution to the process of building a strong nation through Chinese-style modernisation and advancing the great cause of national rejuvenation."

Most of Hong Kong's 360 delegation members were seated in the "gold area", a podium to the left of the gate tower, in front of the media zone, according to delegation member Simon Hoey Lee.

The lawmaker told the Post the delegation assembled at 4.50am and passed through two rounds of security checks before being allowed into Changan Avenue.

"This military parade, conducted amid an increasingly complex international environment, carries special significance," he said.

"The display of so many new weapons serves as a warning that launching a war in Asia would be impossible."

A key highlight of the parade was the debut of the DF-61, believed to be China's most advanced intercontinental ballistic missile after the DF-41. The DF-61 is expected to be part of the PLA Rocket Force's long-range missile operations.

Also appearing for the first time was the JL-3, a new third-generation, intercontinental-range submarine-launched ballistic missile, crucial for the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) sea-based nuclear deterrence operations.

In his opening address, President Xi said the Chinese people "firmly stand on the right side of history and the progress of human civilisation" as he urged officers and soldiers to "accelerate the building of a world-class military" and "resolutely safeguard national sovereignty".

The city delegation comprises government officials, members of the legislature and judiciary, and veterans of the conflict. Representatives from various sectors, including business, education and technology, are also in the group.

The delegation will attend a cultural gala in the evening, and is expected to return home on Thursday. Meanwhile in Hong Kong, a ceremony commemorating the 80th anniversary of Victory Day took place at City Hall in Central at about 8am.

The 18-minute ceremony included flag-raising, ten rifle volleys by the Hong Kong Police Rifle Squad, a two-minute silence, wreath-laying, and a bowing tribute led by Chief Secretary Chan Kwok-ki.

In Ho Man Tin, more than 1,000 students and teachers of Scientia Secondary School gathered at the auditorium to watch the live broadcast of the military parade in Beijing.

According to its principal, Wong Ching-yung, the event aimed to deepen students' understanding of China's war history and the nation's strength amid heightened geopolitical tensions with the West. They stood up and sang the national anthem during the live stream at 9am, when the ceremony began, and there was much applause during President Xi's speech.

After the live broadcast, two student representatives, or "civil education ambassadors", gave a thematic lecture on the history of the Second Sino-Japanese war.

Some students said the event led them to appreciate China's strength and encouraged them to study harder.

"This parade has been especially meaningful to local students like us," said 16-year-old Cheung Ka-hei.

"The event enabled me to understand what our motherland is like and that we need to be united." Fellow student Natalie Chan Shun-ka, 15, said she was inspired to overcome difficulties from observing the parade and learning the history of the war.

“When we were united, we achieved the seemingly impossible victory during the War of Resistance. In our daily lives, we should also be united, so that we can achieve and develop more.”