

Beijing-aligned journalists form rival federation

By Carmen Cheung

THE pro-democracy Hong Kong Journalists' Association has gained a shadow as the change of sovereignty approaches.

The Hong Kong Federation of Journalists, initiated by four pro-Beijing Chinese-language newspapers and one other, celebrated its establishment yesterday.

The federation has about 100 members — 15 per cent of the journalists' association's membership — and has a fund of \$100,000 donated by the bosses of the five papers.

The 12 council members include executives from *Wen Wei Pao*, *Ta Kung Pao*, *The New Evening Post*, *Hong Kong Commercial Daily* and *Tin Tin Daily News*.

China's official Xinhua news agency showed its goodwill by sending top officials to the founding ceremony.

Wen Wei Po managing editor and federation chairman Edmund Chan Kin-ming said the federation aimed to stimulate contacts among local journalists as well as communication between local and mainland journalists, and to raise the professional standard and spirit of local reporters.

"We also aim to improve press reporting as there are so many sensational news reports which do no good for society," Mr Chan said.

He denied the federation aimed to rival the pro-democracy journalists' associ-

ation in the run-up to the handover.

"Both of us are organisations in this field, and the only difference is the form of activities we organise."

He said that in his view, the association behaved like a pressure group.

"I personally don't agree with the journalists' association's attitude. Sometimes I think they overreact to some issues," Mr Chan said without giving an example.

He also said the role of the association was quite different from that of the Hong Kong News Executives' Association, whose members are editors.

"I would say the journalists' association plays the role of defending the rights of the journalists," Mr Chan said.

The federation will arrange seminars and local visits for its members but has no plans yet to send a delegation to Beijing.

Mr Chan said it would arrange a talk on the proposed new charging system for telecommunications, and visit public authorities.

He said the federation allowed double membership of the two journalists' organisations and had no plans to bar journalists from pro-democracy newspapers or from newspapers which often criticised the Chinese government.

The association, which has about 680 members, said it welcomed the new group.