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Activist lauds rise of political groups

IT is encouraging that the younger generation of Hongkong people making attempts to determine their fate, a Taiwan political activist said yesterday.

A leading member of the opposition and an ex-member of the Taiwan Legislative Yuan, Mr Kang Ning-hsiang, said he was glad to see that so many political groups had sprung up recently in response to the changing political climate in the territory.

Kang, who is here on a private visit, told *The Standard* that the development of these groups would form a growing force in the local political scene and would put Hongkong in a better bargaining position when it had to deal with China subsequently.

He was particularly impressed by the

formation of the Progressive Hongkong Society, which represents a wide range of interests.

"These efforts should be encouraged because it represents the concern of the young people here for their future. It is a useful and meaningful development," he said.

Kang, an outspoken critic of the Nationalist government in Taiwan, was a member of the Legislative Yuan from 1972 to 1982. He was defeated in the 1983 elections but still kept close ties with the opposition. He is currently publisher of several "political" magazines there.

He said the newly-formed political groups should try to secure a greater say in the drafting of the basic law which

would determine the political framework on which Hongkong would operate after 1997.

Their growth was also an acid test for China's sincerity in allowing local people to achieve self-government as promised in the Sino-British joint declaration, he said.

"As these groups flex their political muscle, China might be tempted to interfere. The way it reacts would show clearly whether it has made a false promise to the Hongkong people."

He said young people who were born and brought up here should play a more active role in moulding their own future.

On the economic side, Kang said Hongkong would remain the best place in the world for doing business.

Despite the Nationalist government's special measures to lure Hongkong capital, the chance of success was slim because Taiwan still exercised control on the movement of capital in and out of the country.

"The free flow of capital is a unique feature of Hongkong which could not be found in Taiwan and many other countries."

"It is unlikely Hongkong businessmen would transfer their funds to Taiwan."

On the Chinese-American writer, Mr Henry Liu's murder case, he said it had caused irreparable damage to the reputation of the Taiwan government.

It also soured the relationship between Taiwan and the United States, he

said.

He said there was a feeling among American politicians and journalists that it was outrageous for the Taiwan authorities to send somebody to kill Liu in the United States.

When Liu was murdered last October, he was in America as a visiting scholar of the East Asia Institute of Columbia University.

The Taiwanese connection in this case would surely create an unpleasant image among overseas Chinese intellectuals, particularly those critical of the Nationalist government.

He said the ruling Nationalist party should have learned a good lesson and reviewed its existing policies in clamping down on dissidents.