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## Anticipating heated debate

Heated debate is expected tomorrow at the Chinese University over a letter on Hongkong's future drafted by the student union for China's Prime Minister, Mr Zhao Ziyang.

The student union expects at least several hundred students in 40 to 50 discussion groups to pass judgment on the wisdom of sending the letter to Mr Zhao as well as of the views expressed in the letter.

The draft, prepared by the student union, runs to 2,000 to 3,000 words.

If things go smoothly, the letter will be sent to the Chinese leader before the end of the year, the union's chairman, Mr Law Wing-sang, said.

The draft comes less than a month after a letter — issued in the name of the executive committees of the student unions of the University of Hongkong, the Chinese University and the Hongkong Polytechnic — was forwarded to the British Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, on the 1997 issue.

Mr Law said copies of the draft's full text will be distributed to those students participating in the discussions tomorrow afternoon in the three colleges that make up the Chinese University.

A mass meeting was ruled out as the form of discussion to give participants more chance to air their opinions.

Mr Law said the student union had not ruled out the need for a general poll or some other method for students to express their views afterwards if the discussion groups cannot draw enough people.

Mr Law declined to shed light on the contents of the letter.

But it was learned the draft says the Chinese Government should allow people with different political beliefs to rule Hongkong after 1997.

The draft also suggests that China should not interfere with Hongkong's future administration.

It was not yet known whether the letter would be jointly issued with the students of the University of Hongkong and Hongkong Polytechnic.

Before the row at the University of Hongkong over the letter to Mrs Thatcher, the three student unions had tentatively decided to write a joint letter to Mr Zhao.

Mr Law said the council of the polytechnic's student union had yet to discuss the matter.

And the decision by the students of the University of Hongkong will hinge on a poll tomorrow.

"It is only after the students cast their votes to decide on such a need that the HKU student union will consider whether to co-sign our letter," Mr Law said.

Meanwhile, the student unions of both universities yesterday declined to comment on a statement made by a student body over their decisions to send the letter to Mrs Thatcher.

The statement called for the resignations of the executive committee and the council of the HKU student union "for neglecting the views of the students."

It also urged the student unions to hold a mass meeting to explain to their students the "real facts" behind the sending of the letter.