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# 13 years to build a good image: paper

Hongkong has 13 years to build up a good image — the basis upon which confidence of the people rests, according to an independent newspaper, Sing Pao.

It suggested in its editorial yesterday this would be the way to make Hongkong people believe they could enjoy the status quo for 50 years after 1997, as promised by China.

Confidence was built on image, it said, just as Hongkong people put their trust in famous brands.

Quoting one Peking official, who is an expert on Hongkong affairs, as saying China had not sufficient time yet to prove its sincerity in maintaining the territory's status quo for 50 years after 1997, the editorial maintained there were still 13 years from now — sufficient — to set up a good image.

The high degree of prosperity and stability of Hongkong had been achieved only in the past 20 years or so and the most outstanding development of satellite towns, which surpassed many neighbouring countries, came over 10 years, it said.

Therefore it would not be impossible for China to prove its sincerity to keep 50 years after 1997 unchanged, the editorial concluded.

A leftwing paper, Wen Wei Pao, said since China adopted a correct policy and most Hongkong compatriots were patriotic, these already provided a "strong guarantee" for Hongkong's prosperity.

The editorial commended the director of the local branch of the New China News Agency, Mr Xu Jiatao, as presenting an "objective and optimistic" attitude on the future of Hongkong when he spoke to a group of young management professionals on Wednesday.

The attitude stemmed from two beliefs, it said, that China's policy was correct and that most Hongkong compatriots were patriotic.

And these two beliefs were the most basic and most crucial motivating forces for the future development of the territory.

The editorial said the Chinese Government's policy on Hongkong was formed after "lots of" research and analysis.

It also said all opinion surveys by different groups in different districts showed the majority of the people agreed that Hongkong's sovereignty belonged to China — a sufficient point to believe that Hongkong compatriots supported China's recovery of sovereignty.

As long as the central Government adopted the correct policy, the worries of some people could be diverted, it said.

Most of the compatriots wished to make Hongkong more prosperous through their own efforts, it noted, not only to maintain national integrity, but also to contribute to the four modernisations of China.

Ming Pao compared and contrasted the standpoints of China's top leader, Mr Deng Xiaoping, and the Umelco three on the issue of confidence.

The editorial suggested the difference in viewpoints came from the question of whether people had confidence in a Hongkong self-rule instead of the existence of a confidence problem here.

It said Mr Deng obviously had confidence that China's way would work and the Chinese were not idiots — that Hongkong people could manage themselves.

Whether Hongkong was capable of self-administration had yet to be seen, it said, but the most important things to be done would be:

● The most beneficial

things to five million Hongkong people would be to maintain prosperity and stability for the next 13 years, while aiming for successful Hongkong self-rule in the 50 years after 1997.

● The people should spare no efforts in achieving those goals — with confidence.

● To keep up Hongkong's "freedom and rule-by-law" while taking an active and optimistic attitude.

"One country, two systems" was no easy job, it said, but that was the only way out.

The Financial Daily called on China to make a "realistic" evaluation of Hongkong people's confidence.

The maintenance of prosperity and stability for Hongkong in future depended on whether the people had solid faith.

China's stand and policy could be firm and fixed, but the detailed arrangements were affecting the people's confidence, it said.

The key to success or failure of China's policy on Hongkong rests on how fair China evaluated Hongkong people's confidence.

Another Chinese newspaper, the Hongkong Daily News, however, said "people like Chung Sze-yuen" were unlikely to visit Peking again, following an analysis of Mr Xu's speech in which he used the words "remnants of colonialism" to refer to the three Umelco members.

It stressed that Mr Xu's attack on those doubtful of China's policy were both "reasonable and of goodwill."

But it also agreed that Umelco members were "stating the facts" on the worries and anxieties of Hongkong people.

It said the visits to London and Peking were both bids to "minimise disturbances" and from Hongkong's stand, the Umelco members were doing nothing wrong in principle.