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23 locals for law drafting team ³⁻¹⁶

The drafting committee on Hongkong's Basic Law will have 59 members — 23 of them from Hongkong.

And the names of members will be revealed within a few days, Chinese Prime Minister Mr Zhao Ziyang said in London.

Confirmation that there will be 59 members came from the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Mr Peng Chong, during its 11th session yesterday afternoon, according to a China News Service report.

Mr Peng is also the Director of the Law Committee of the NPC.

He said its members would include 15 senior officials of various Government departments, 10 well-known figures and 11 legal experts.

Mr Peng added that the Hongkong representatives would be involved in such fields as commerce and industry, culture, education, law, trade unions and religion.

He also said the committee would be headed by one director, eight deputy directors, one secretary general and two vice-secretary generals.

The aim was to take into account every aspect of Hongkong.

Mr Zhao said in London that the names of committee members would be announced within the next few days.

He promised the people of Hongkong that they would "warmly receive" the news.

Mr Zhao's pledge came at a press conference marking the end of his week in the United Kingdom.

Earlier, the British Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, called at Claridges, where Mr Zhao has been staying, for a final brief round of talks and to say farewell.

Mr Zhao accompanied Mrs Thatcher out of the hotel and saw her into her car.

At his press conference, he said he and Mrs Thatcher had "exchanged views on the

effective implementation of the Joint Declaration on Hongkong, which was the very important content of our talks."

But they did not spend a lot of time discussing the issue, "as we shared identical views on the question."

Mr Zhao added: "Both sides are quite satisfied with the Joint Declaration."

It had won credit and prestige for the two countries abroad.

"I share her views on the Joint Liaison Group, which is to hold its first formal meeting in London next month," Mr Zhao said.

"We hope and we are sure that the Joint Liaison Group will carry out the important mission entrusted to it by the respective governments."

On the Basic Law for the Hongkong special administrative region, he said: "In the next few days, the composition of the drafting committee for the Basic Law will be made public and I am sure people in Hongkong will

warmly receive the composition . . .

"We are very encouraged by the latest developments and the situation in Hongkong since the signing of the joint agreement. So this is further proof that the agreement China and Britain have signed on Hongkong is a very good agreement."

Mr Zhao said the two sides had succeeded in settling the Hongkong question in a very satisfactory manner.

"We will continue this spirit so it will be effected in a sincere and comprehensive manner to ensure the prosperity and stability of Hongkong."

He said he was "doubly confident" after his visit to the UK that relations between the two countries would become even closer.