

SEMP

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1997 press freedom supported

LOCAL Basic Law drafter, Mr Justice Simon Li, yesterday supported the view of senior Chinese official, Mr Lu Ping, that freedom of the press after 1997 should continue, provided China's sovereignty over Hongkong was not infringed.

Mr Justice Li aired his views on the controversial issue after convening a two-day meeting in Zhuhai of the Basic Law Drafting Committee sub-group on inhabitants' rights and duties.

Mr Lu, the drafting committee's deputy secretary-general, made a month-long fact-finding visit to Hongkong in January. He told journalists then that freedom of the press would continue in Hongkong after 1997, provided it was not detrimental to China's sovereign rights over the territory.

The two-day meeting discussed the definition of inhabitants and the wide range of freedoms, including freedom of the press and of

speech, that are listed in the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law draft structure.

Mr Justice Li, one of two co-convenors, said the next group meeting would be held in Xiamen on August 25 and 26. In their next meeting, the group members aim to work on the initial drafting of the clauses regarding inhabitants' rights and duties under the Basic Law, although they are subject to future amendments by the drafting committee.