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Accord reached on court of appeal

CHINA's top official in charge of Hongkong affairs, Ji Pengfei, last night said the Chinese and British teams of the Joint Liaison Group had no major differences over the setting up of a final court of appeal in Hongkong before 1997.

Mr Ji, the director of the Hongkong and Macau Affairs Office, told a visiting delegation of the Hongkong Law Society, led by its chairman Donald Yapp, that the principles and personnel arrangements regarding the establishment of the appeal court had yet to be negotiated between Britain and China.

The court could be set up in Hongkong before 1997 so that lawyers have enough time to get familiar with its operation.

Mr Ji said there were only about 50,000 lawyers in China and the system was not sound enough.

A deputy director Lu Ping said various sectors of the community should be consulted before relevant legislations were introduced in Hongkong.

The Hongkong delegation arrived in Beijing on Thursday and will travel to Shanghai and Nanjing.

The lawyers visited the Ministry of Justice, the legal affairs committee under the National People's Congress.