

Agreement likely over appeal court

By KENT CHEN

LEGAL experts for the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group (JLG) are expected to resolve their differences today over the setting up of the Final Court of Appeal in Hongkong.

Speaking after yesterday's session, the leaders of the British and the Chinese team, Mr Brian Suttill and Mr Zheng Weirong, said they had made some progress.

The Chinese team has agreed to the British proposal that the court should be established in Hongkong well before 1997.

Mr Cheng said: "Consensus between the two sides has been reached on a number of issues but there are some problems which need to be further discussed."

Mr Suttill, the Deputy Registrar of the Supreme Court, also said the two sides had made good progress, but there were still unresolved issues.

The experts exchanged views on the power of the court, its composition and the qualifications of the judges.

They hope today's session will bring to an end more than two years of discussions.

The results will be submitted to the next plenary session of the JLG for endorsement and then the British can start preparing for the Final Court of Appeal to take over the role of the Privy Council as provided in the Joint Declaration.

Officials estimate it will take at least 18 months to set up the court.

The Sino-British Land Commission will meet tomorrow to review the 1990-91 land disposal programme.

The six-member commission was established in 1985 to consult on the implementation of the provisions of the Joint Declaration on land leases and related matters.