

J.C.M.P.

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10pc and no more Government told

By DONALD CHEUNG

Four major employers associations have called on the Government to limit civil servants' pay rises at 10 per cent.

In a joint statement issued yesterday, the groups said anything in excess at any level would be "tantamount to treating civil servants as a privileged class."

The associations are the Hongkong General Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Hongkong Industries, the Chinese Manufacturers' Association and the Employers' Federation of Hongkong.

Their call is understood to be in response to Hongkong's 168,000 civil servants demand for a 12-16 per cent pay rise in the next financial year.

Commenting on the Financial Secretary's proposed limited supplementary expenditure on the civil service in the 1984/85 financial year to \$1.8 billion, the em-

ployers said this would appear to have the effect of awarding pay increases for civil servants comparable to those implemented by the private sector.

The employers noted the trends indicated in the recent Pay Trend Survey, saying the average increases shown were typical of those granted by leading companies with well-defined personnel policies, the statement said.

If the Government were to "yield to civil service unions' pressure" and grant an increase in excess of these norms it would inevitably spark off a round of further demands within the private sector, they said.

"This would contribute to a continued high rate of inflation in 1984, and harm the chance of any sustained economic recovery."

An increase of 10 per cent at lower paid levels would be "generous and better than the

average for private companies," it said.

They rejected the claim that civil servants were "owed" an increase from last year.

"If certain grades in the civil service are underpaid, the means of restoring parity would only be by pay level surveys, rather than by any carry-forward system," it said, stressing the need for the Government to carry out such surveys.

The associations pointed out that annual pay increments in the civil service are generally granted in addition to routine increments awarded as part of a civil servant's career path.

"The fact that a percentage of civil servants are at maximum pay levels has been over-emphasised," they said.

"It is unacceptable that all civil servants should benefit excessively by high awards which partly compensate those at the maximum of their incremental scales," they added.

If the Government concedes a 16 per cent cost-of-living increase it would give many civil servants a cash boost of over 20 per cent, it said.

"This would be socially divisive and wrong for the reasons stated and particularly at the end of a recession period when real wages have fallen for most workers in the private sector."