

Anson Chan urges fair play

CHIEF Secretary Anson Chan Fang On-sang yesterday urged fellow Legislative Councillors to be more fair-minded towards civil servants, who were shouldering a heavy burden in the run up to 1997.

Mrs Chan, head of the territory's 190,000-strong civil service, also described the remuneration packages for public servants as "reasonable".

She said this year's growth in the number of civil servants had been closely monitored and was in accordance with the community's needs.

Mrs Chan said civil servants were subjected to heavy pressure during the transition. She stressed the importance of maintaining stability at all levels of the civil service.

Sir Hamish Macleod's swansong 1995-96 Budget was overwhelmingly approved by the Legislative Council yesterday. **Connie Law, Catherine Ng and Linda Choy** report.

"The transition years place a particularly heavy burden on the Civil Service and create uncertainties which perhaps prey more heavily on the minds of civil servants than on other sectors of the community," she said.

It was therefore crucial to maintain morale and stability within all ranks of the civil service, Mrs Chan said.

"In this task, I hope we can count on the support and fair-mindedness of this Council and of the wider public, including the media."

Civil servants worked as

a team and important decisions were taken collectively.

Responding to some legislators' queries on whether civil servants were worthy of their pay, Mrs Chan said it was important for the Government to be a "good employer" to attract and retain quality people.

"But if we are to maintain this situation, we must provide a remuneration package that both government officials - and the community which pays us - feel is reasonable," she told the lawmakers.

"We need to maintain

the morale and the integrity of the civil service in the next few crucial years ahead - and beyond that. Reducing benefits just for the sake of it would surely be counter-productive."

The Government was aware of the need to modernise its conditions of service for staff.

The new common terms of appointment, intended to bring changes to the outdated package, would be implemented as soon as possible following agreement with the Chinese side.

On the adoption of Mandarin, Mrs Chan said the Government had stepped up training to make itself more user-friendly.

It was important to maintain a high standard of English to maintain Hong Kong's status as an international city.