

# 1,500 villagers rally to back kuk's Legco call

By Pamela Ngai

MORE than 1,500 villagers yesterday packed the Sha Tin Town Hall to declare their support for the Heung Yee Kuk's demand for direct representation in the legislature.

The rally, which lasted 2½ hours, attracted more than 900 representatives of villages under the kuk's jurisdiction, about 100 kuk members and other interested villagers.

It ended with all participants vowing with raised hands, that they would go on fighting until the kuk achieved Legco representation.

They held up their hands to endorse a statement read out at the gathering, which said they all strongly requested a Legco seat be given to a Heung Yee Kuk representative.

The statement said kuk members who had entered Legco through the electoral college or by government appointment did not have a statutory status to represent the kuk and indigenous people in the New Territories.

Kuk chairman Mr Lau Wong-fat called the request for direct representation "reasonable and necessary".

The fight was intended to ensure the future political rights of the 500,000 indigenous people in the New Territories, Mr Lau said.

"This rally is a continuation of our

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action to boycott the White Paper," he said. "This was an opportunity for rural committee members, village representatives and New Territories people to join forces."

The chairman quoted the Chief Secretary, Sir David Ford, as saying the rights of indigenous people in the New Territories definitely would be represented in the Legislative Council.

Sir David also gave assurances that the Governor, in considering appointments to Legco this year, would seriously consider the kuk's request.

Said Mr Lau: "As an interim measure, it is all right at the present stage. I personally find this acceptable as a first step."

"But the arrangement does not meet our ultimate goal. We must continue with our fight."

A senior lecturer of the Chinese University's Government and Public Administration Department, Dr H C Kuan, said the kuk used to have no formal representatives in Legco but the rights of indigenous people were nonetheless respected.

Dr Kuan called on indigenous people to examine the rights they were enjoying and, by making necessary adjustments, attempt to win public support.