

# 110 China graft claims sent to ICAC

By DARREN GOODSIR

THE ICAC revealed yesterday that 110 graft complaints involving mainland enterprises in Hong Kong had been lodged by the end of August.

Commissioner Bertrand de Speville said, however, that only 52 matters "with a PRC connection" had been considered worth pursuing.

Last year, 207 reports were lodged - 136 of which were investigated - but 51 related to a driving licence scandal.

Mr de Speville remained ambivalent on the question of prosecutions, citing difficulties in getting evidence, but confirmed arrests had followed such complaints.

He also remained silent on the source of complaints.

Mr de Speville's comments were the first since his return on Saturday from a three-day tour to China.

During his second visit to the mainland he had met senior corruption fighters to plan next year's internation-

al graft conference in Beijing.

It is understood he also sought clarification on statements made this year by Liang Guoqing, deputy procurator-general in the Supreme People's Procuratorate, of China wanting to take direct action in Hong Kong against corrupt officials of mainland enterprises.

ICAC sources said Mr Liang stressed he was misunderstood and did not mean interference in the territory's jurisdiction.

Mr de Speville did not elaborate on discussions, but cautioned against misinterpreting the figures on mainland enterprises.

"These figures, viewed in absolute terms, are not particularly significant," he said, after outlining to legislators ICAC policy commitments for the coming year.

"When we say PRC-related, we do take a very broad meaning to that term.

"If the complainant, or the subject of the complaint,

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or the company involved, or the transaction complained about has a PRC connection, then we put them into this group of figures."

Mr de Speville said he was pleased with the assistance of the Chinese Enterprise Association, the body representing 950 such firms in the territory, and commended their dedication to promoting proper business conduct.

They were one of six business chambers who helped organise a business ethics seminar in May.

Mr de Speville also hinted Chinese authorities would soon be taking criminal action against Hong Kong businessmen renowned for bribing mainland officials in return for favourable treatment.

"I am quite sure it won't be long before a Hong Kong businessman or his employee comes badly unstuck in China" he said.

"I have to say I don't accept for a moment that Hong Kong businessmen - or foreign businessmen - in China are simply the unwilling victims of approaches made to them.

"I believe, in some instances, they are the initiators... the Chinese have come to realise that.

"Increasingly, the spotlight - the focus of their attention - is coming on the payer of the bribe and not merely the receiver."

Mr de Speville said the major problem in prosecuting private sector corruption was the reluctance of employers to confirm their workers were not entitled to secret commissions.

This was across-the-board - not simply restricted to complaints with a PRC element.

Mr de Speville also reported ICAC concern about small numbers of disciplined service officers indulging in corruption along the border and in the protection of vice and gambling centres.

He said officers had been targeted for raids.