

## ~~Acquitted candidate seeks rematch~~

**By Apple Wan**

A DEFEATED Democratic Party candidate in the Urban Council elections, Cheng Kar-foo, is calling for a by-election because, he says, an allegedly bungled trial cost him his chance of winning a seat.

Supporters of Mr Cheng, who stood in the Ap lei Chau district, petitioned Government House yesterday.

Mr Cheng had been accused of publishing false statements in his election material during the district board election last September, which he won.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) suit charged him with claiming false credit for initiatives to clean up an Ap Lei Chau estate.

He was cleared of the charges last Monday, one day after the Urban Council election which he lost by less than 400 votes.

He said on the day the charge was dropped that he could have won in the Urban Council polls had the decision been made earlier.

Yesterday, Mr Cheng was accompanied by 15 Ap Lei Chau residents to Government House.

One of them insisted that Mr Cheng would have beaten incumbent Urban Councillor Ronnie Wong, who won by 381 votes, if the verdict had not been delayed.

The prosecutor had promised that the verdict could be

announced before election day, the protesters said.

"The magistrate had dragged the case for more than three weeks and then the verdict was delivered only one day after the (municipal) election," the residents' spokesman, Tse Yun-sim, said.

"Why couldn't it (the court) give the verdict a little earlier to allow Mr Cheng to clear his name before polling day?"

"This had greatly affected Mr Cheng's reputation and image in the district and created an unfavourable atmosphere during the election."

Mr Cheng said he would file for a judicial review and was considering a survey of Ap Lei Chau residents to gauge their "real" preference.