

# 11.17 Access scheme widened

**FUNG WAI-KONG**

The public will soon have the right to seek access to police and ICAC information, but with no guarantee of success.

Preparatory work on handling requests was finished, despite the fact neither department was included in the access-to-information scheme, said Grace Pun Wu Kam-yin, head of the Access to Information Office.

The Government has told all departments that they must respond to public requests for information ac-

ording to the scheme's code of practice, she said.

"Even those not in the scheme cannot reject public requests," she said.

The public will be entitled to appeal if a request is turned down.

Apart from the police and ICAC, six other bodies are excluded. They are Government House, the Audit Department, the Constitutional Affairs Branch, the Administration Wing of the Chief Secretary's office, the Secretariat of the Public Service Commission and the Inde-

pendent Police Complaints Council.

Mrs Pun said the public would now be able to file requests to these bodies.

The scheme, which began in March last year, has received 1,170 requests. There are about 20 to 30 per week.

Mrs Pun said 36 requests had been rejected so far, 20 of them by the Lands Department.

These were mainly requests to track property ownership and were rejected on the grounds of protecting personal privacy.