

## Action against maids rejected

IN the past three months the Government has issued 119 on-the-spot summonses to litter offenders and arrested 102 illegal hawkers in and around Chater Gardens.

The Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Graham Barnes, told councillors the Government had initiated 31 prosecutions against illegal hawkers and seized 138 lots of abandoned goods within the same period.

The issue was brought up by Mrs Peggy Lam Pei Yudja, who pressed for official action to alleviate the environmental nuisance created by Filipino maids during Sundays and public holidays in the area.

Mr Michael Cheng Tak-kin asked why the Government tolerated the littering and illegal hawking at Chater Gardens and Statue Square instead of drawing up long-term solutions to the environmental problem.

Mr Edward Ho Sing-tin proposed that a specific venue be set aside for the Filipinos as a gathering place on public holidays.

But Mr Barnes was worried that the area needed would be very large to cope

with the estimated 20,000 Filipinos who congregated on Sundays.

He maintained that nobody was entitled to direct others to a specific place, adding that the maids' gatherings were legal.

He also pointed out that it was "extremely difficult" to draw up specific provisions for a particular group of people in the territory.

But Mr Peter Wong Hong-yuen was dissatisfied over the resources that had to be deployed to clean up the litter left behind by the maids.

Mrs Lam proposed charging an entrance fee to the parks to cover the cost of rubbish collection.

However, Mr Barnes said that if charges were to be made they should also be applied to the public.

"On a per capita basis, I doubt whether the litter [made by Filipinos] is worse than any other citizens in Hongkong," he said.

Mr Barnes said the Government had raised the litter issue with the Philippines' Consul-General, Mr Antonio Villamor, who had helped promote a cleaning campaign.