

Angry hawkers march for pitch²⁰⁷²

A GROUP of defiant Lam Tin estate hawkers yesterday marched to the Housing Department headquarters in Homantin and handed in 10,000 signatures from residents who want a permanent site for hawkers' stalls.

The hawkers also submitted an open letter to the department to try to arrange a discussion with housing officials about their problems.

In July, the Housing Department carried out a three-week clearance operation after complaints from estate shopkeepers.

The operation forced some of the 300 hawkers, who have been doing business for 10 years, to move to a walkway between Lam Tin East Community Centre and a school.

A hawker representative, Mr Wong Chong-wing, told the *South China Morning Post* that two thirds of the hawkers had either gone outside the estate or moved their wares to Kwun Tong to continue business.

He said allowing them in the estate would not cause a nuisance or make the place dirtier, as hawkers cleaned up when they finished.

Said Mr Wong: "We are only operating on the walkway from 6 am to 10 am and from 4 pm to 7 pm daily, but the Housing Department is trying to force us out by digging up the walkway as well as putting blockages to prevent us from entering.

"We decided to move up a bit, where the Housing Department says the area does not fall into its jurisdiction, but today we have had two hawkers arrested by the Urban Services Department for illegal hawking and causing an obstruction."

A Housing Department spokesman said a meeting was held with the hawkers on August 11, explaining clearly the department's stand.

He said some of the hawkers were still appearing in the estate before seven every morning, before clean-up teams start.