

100 hawkers march to claim damages

MORE THAN 100 angry Lamtin hawkers yesterday marched on Housing Department offices at Sanpokong demanding \$20,000 in compensation for goods that were damaged and property they claim went missing during a clearance operation on Monday.

Earlier they came face-to-face with scores of police when they gathered outside Kuntong Magistracy where two colleagues were appearing on charges of obstruction.

A tense confrontation east of town Tam Wai-chuen 20 and Lam Hon-man, 32, stepped from the court room, having been remanded for trial on May

27 and June 4.

They were arrested by Blue Berets on Monday when they allegedly tried to stop Housing Department clearance workers from taking away their goods.

After the court hearing, their defiant colleagues marched to the Sanpokong government offices to reclaim their confiscated goods. Anger mounted once the goods were handed over.

"It is all damaged and some of the equipment, such as weighing scales are missing," alleged hawker leader Mr Chan Hon-ming. "We estimate our loss runs to about \$20,000."

The furious group took their rotten and stinking food to the Lamtin housing office and displayed it in front of the office as a protest before returning to Sanpokong in the afternoon and demanding compensation.

Two representatives were allowed to make their demand to district estate manager (East) Mr Leung Chung-yau. And after two hours of discussions, the hawker group failed to get their demand.

One of the representatives who discussed with Mr Leung was Mr Lam Chi-bond who told the hawkers that Mr Leung had made it clear to him it would be impossible to make any compensation to the hawkers' claims.

"Mr Leung cited a law stating that government servants, acting in the course of their duty, could not be held responsible for the damage they have caused," Mr Lam claimed.

After a brief discussion, the hawkers decided that they should continue with their hawking today but would only display a small amount of goods so that they would not suffer too big a loss when the clearance division comes again.