

The sad state of tennis

THE tennis courts at the Titiwangsa Sports Complex were once the most beautiful in the country, but their condition has now deteriorated into a sad and barely usable state.

Currently, many of the 10 courts, owned and managed by Kuala Lumpur City Hall, have serious cracks, are uneven and are covered in slippery moss.

The Kuala Lumpur Lawn Tennis Association (Tennis KL), who conduct their junior development programmes there, are at their wits' end after having already filed appeals for resurfacing to various authorities, including City Hall and the Youth and Sports Ministry, to no avail.

Tennis KL honorary secretary Maria Ghazali is hoping the authorities will step in to help save the courts, which are still being used by young players despite their dangerous condition.

"We are grateful to City Hall for allowing us to use the courts to conduct our development programmes. However, something has to be done," said Maria when met recently.

"From the 10 courts there, four are still in a reasonable condition as they were resurfaced during

the Covid-19 lockdown period.

"But the remaining six courts are in terrible condition, as they have deep cracks and are very slippery due to the moss.

"We conduct non-profit development programmes for young players every Saturday and Sunday for between 60 to 70 players, and having the courts in this condition is dangerous for young children.

"We are also unable to organise national junior or international competitions — which are both very important for development — due to the condition, as well as the specifications of the court (run-off area dimensions) which does not meet ITF standards.

"We cannot afford to run programmes at other courts because the rental rates are high and we need to use a lot of courts.

"We hope the Youth and Sports Ministry or City Hall can help refurbish the courts.

"This is an asset under City Hall, and they refurbished their courts in Bangsar and Taman Tun Dr Ismail, so why not at Titiwangsa as well?"

"If they can't refurbish all the courts at once, doing it in phases is also fine. We understand that



The badly deteriorated tennis courts at Titiwangsa Sports Complex. PIC FROM KUALA LUMPUR LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION.

the costs are high."

The courts at the Titiwangsa Sports Complex, located just 5km away from the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, were built in the late 1970s and hosted numerous competitions prior to the opening of the National Tennis Centre at Jalan Tuanku Abdul Halim (formerly Jalan Duta) in the 1980s.

Maria added that refurbishing the courts to allow for the hosting of tournaments would not only benefit tennis, but also the lo-

cal economy.

"The ecosystem surrounding the courts makes it a perfect venue for hosting tournaments," said Maria.

"There is a lake next to it with a lot of people, and there is also a food court nearby so there is plenty of natural traffic which makes it attractive for sponsors.

"Pulling players and tourists to watch tournaments there would have a significant impact on the local economy."

Tennis KL's strong development programmes have paid dividends at the Malaysia Games (Sukma).

The Federal Territories ended a 30-year wait for a gold medal when they won the mixed team category — fielding a team with an average age of 16 — as well as the men's doubles (Darrshan Kumar-Leroy Yong) at Sukma Sarawak last year.

Darrshan also won the men's singles bronze. **By Fadhli Ishak**