



香港網球總會 Hong Kong Tennis Association

香港銅鑼灣掃桿埔大球場徑1號奧運大樓1021室
Room 1021, Olympic House, 1 Stadium Path,
So Kon Po, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong

22 December 2020

Mr. YEUNG Tak Keung, JP
Commissioner for Sports
Home Affairs Bureau
Recreation and Sport Branch
13/F, West Wing
Central Government Offices
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar
Hong Kong

Dear Mr Yeung,

The tennis community welcomes the latest round of anti-epidemic funding proposal which grants a one-off \$7500 subsidy to coaches registered with their National Sports Associations. However, upon hearing yesterday the announcement that the closure of all sports facilities will be further extended to Jan 6th, our association, on behalf of all our stakeholders, would once again urge the government to review the efficacy of such a policy.

Firstly, for the betterment of the community, the government needs to not only be mindful of preventive measures but must also be proactive in creating opportunities for our citizens to strengthen their physical health and holistic well-being. This is particularly important in our city where living quarters are compact and highly dense.

Secondly, the ability to sustain the livelihoods of tennis coaches has a profound impact on the development of our sport as a whole. During the course of this year, repeated court closures are making a significant impact on their earnings. Some are finding it difficult to make ends meet and they are expressing their frustrations as they fail to see the rationale behind the government's decisions and the consistency with which the government apply their decisions to all activities.

It is understandable that during exceptional circumstances of alarming spread of the COVID-19 virus, the government has a need to discourage citizens from going out of their homes and engaging in non-essential and risky activities.

Although in general, companies are advised to allow their staff to work from home, they are not prohibited at all from going to their offices. In contrast, a tennis court is a place of work for a tennis coach and they are being denied the opportunity to make their living. It is quite undeniable that the risk of possible infections spread through tennis is ranked as very low by most health experts and thus it is not difficult to see why those affected would be frustrated.

Moreover, many are questioning whether such policies are in fact effective. From the accounts that one can gather, the number of people going out and about conducting their normal activities have not decreased.



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Whereas sports facilities are closed, some citizens are turning to alternative outdoor venues to engage in sports and leisure. Even worse, the decrease of outdoor exercising options is channelling some to indoor activities such as gathering in shopping malls, which have remained open. In some cases, this is actually causing those areas to be overcrowded, with little or no control by the authorities. It is therefore difficult for those affected to see why a much safer activity such as tennis is prohibited from being performed in our city.

While every country or territory needs to come up with its own strategy according to its unique situations to deal with the pandemic, it is worth noting that there are very few countries in the world where tennis courts continue to be closed. That is perhaps a point highly worthy of consideration.

We urge the government to give our plea a serious consideration. We strongly feel that tennis does not need to be sacrificed just so that the policies are seen as being fair. Tennis may be a leisure activity and a sport, but it is also a profession for many. Rather than forcing citizens to congregate into parks, hiking trails and shopping malls, it would be beneficial to allow them to engage in safer and more structured outdoor activities, with tennis being one of such.

Our association is recommending that tennis courts be allowed to reopen, with a capacity of 2 persons per court, for a trial period. This is a measure which several countries around the world have adopted. By any measure, an outdoor activity where 2 persons occupy a space of over 2,800 square feet and separated by a net should not be disallowed based on all the reasons given above.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Mok
President
Hong Kong Tennis Association