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Save the BBGS front, at least

Annie Freeda Cruetz

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Thousands have appealed to the authorities to preserve and integrate the front of the two oldest blocks of the 107-year-old Bukit Bintang Girls School into the proposed new development earmarked at the site.

A check by the New Straits Times yesterday, however, revealed that the porch roofings and the classroom doors have been removed and the balustrades upstairs and downstairs knocked down.

BBGS SOS committee member Sandra Sodhy, who has been fighting hard together with thousands of former students of the school to preserve their alma mater, was in tears when she saw what the developer had done.

"From what I gather, some men came to the site on Saturday and Monday and started removing the doors, tiles, windows and knocking down the balustrades and intervening walls."

Sandra said she just could not believe that the developer could do this in spite of the public appeal for the two oldest blocks to be preserved.

"I am distraught and appalled that developer had chosen to ignore the thousands who pleaded for the main blocks to be saved. They even ignored the appeals by Badan Warisan Malaysia (BWM) and Malaysian Institute of Architects."

She said the Government and the authorities should preserve and restore the building.

Sandra said the committee had gone on an extensive signature drive and would be sending the appeals by the students and public to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Cabinet Ministers.

Appeals would also be sent to City Hall.

Heritage conservationist Lim Take Bane said it was very sad to see the building being destroyed.

"This fine piece of Kuala Lumpur's architectural heritage, at least the front two blocks, should be conserved and incorporated into the new development."

In this way, he added, the best of both worlds is obtained with the benefits of the new development enhanced by the heritage value of the fine architectural building which is imbued with so much history.

BWM executive director Elizabeth Cardosa said: "We believe the architectural heritage is a statement of our history and provides us with our sense of place.

"Through preserving our heritage, we recognise and celebrate the achievements of our nation and our people."

She said the organisation was dismayed by the demolition of the two blocks.

The BWM which was formed in 1983, has been pressing for the conservation of the nation's historic buildings and environment.

Cardosa said sympathetic adaption to new uses would ensure their future viability and relevance.