

Group seeks **PM's** help **to** retain **Malaysia Hall**

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By **TAN KAH PENG**

LONDON: An appeal has been made to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to retain Malaysia Hall at Bryanston Square following the expiry of the lease of two of its four buildings.

Sels College principal Datuk Yunus Raiss, who is leading the campaign to retain Malaysia Hall at its present location, told *The Star* he had written to the Prime Minister appealing to him to also retain the other buildings at 46-47 Bryanston Square- "this little Kampung Malaysia" in Britain.

On Wednesday, Portman Estates Ltd took back 44-45 Bryanston Square whose lease expired in September last year.

The basement canteen, pop-

ular with Malaysian students and visitors from home, closed on April 7.

Yunus said 46-47 Bryanston Square should be turned into a cultural centre, complete with meeting rooms, a library and reading room as well as basement canteen.

He offered to help Dr Mahathir negotiate with Portman Estates and the City of Westminster regarding a new canteen at 46-47 whose lease will end in about 12 years.

Friends of Malaysia Hall, led by Yunus, have taken their campaign online at www.malaysiana.org which carries an interview with him and also comments from interested parties.

The closure of 46-47 Bryanston Square caught many Malaysians by surprise because in August last year,

Malaysian Student Department director Dr Kamarudin Md Nor announced that Portman Estates had agreed to a two-year extension.

Dr Kamarudin, who could not be reached for comment, had also announced that the MSD was actively looking for new freehold premises comprising four adjoining buildings within a two-mile radius to house a new Malaysia Hall by September 2003.

Contacted by *The Star*, Portman Estates chief executive J. Ginsburg declined to comment on whether negotiations for the two-year extension (for 45-46 Bryanston Square) had broken down.

He reiterated that the lease of the two buildings had expired and that 45-46 Bryanston Square had been handed back to Portman Estates.