Heritage house in bad shape

A Kutai house in Kota Lima Kiri situated along the Chemor-Kuala Kangsar road, which was preserved by the Badan Warisan Malaysia in 1996, is now in a bad shape.

Members of the Perak Heritage Society and researchers from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM)'s Seri Iskandar campus in Perak visited the house recently and discovered its unsightly condition. The roof is rotten, staircase shaky and termites "rule" the house. The place is now surrounded by tall undergrowth.

The Kutai house is a colloquial term for ancient and most of these houses are found along the banks of the Sungai Perak, mainly in three districts — Kuala Kangsar, Perak Tengah and Pasir Salak.

The Kutai house is a single-room house built using traditional joinery technique, made up of hard wood like cengai and merbau, and mixed with medium hardwood like merron, bamboo, tree barks and leaves.

The Kutai structure has 12 or 16 columns, held together by continuous beams, which run through them.

Research carried out by Abdul Halim Nasir, the author of The Traditional Malay House in 1977, stated that only 37 Kutai houses existed in 18 villages along the western and eastern banks of the river.

UiTM researcher Associate Professor Mohd Sahrizaa Abdul Rashid said there were only 30 Kutai houses left in Perak.

"We should do something to preserve these houses," he said.

"Our UiTM Special Interest Group is interested in taking part in preserving and maintaining them as part of efforts to create an awareness of the value of heritage.

"There is insufficient publicity about the beauty of Kutai houses by the relevant parties.

"A visit to the house is educational as one can learn more about the values and culture of the Malays of the 16th century."