Rumah Kutai
proud home of Perak Malays

THE Rumah Kutai, traditional Malay houses indigenous to Perak, are still in use on the banks of Perak River, mainly in Kota Kangsar, Perak Tengah and Pasir Salak.

Rumah Kutai has only one room, with additional 'rooms' being created by draping cloth between pillars.

- The main structure is made of hardwood such as 'tengai' and 'merah', while reed bamboo, leaves and tree bark are used for the walls.
- The Rumah Kutai structure has 12 columns, held together by beams which run through them.
- Beautifully woven by bamboo mats form the walls, while its roof is made from numbo or 'ngah' hondo.

The house stands two metres above the ground.

The Rumah Kutai is spacious, and built to conform with the Malay tradition of 'shaming', where the open space caters for kenduri or prayers.

The house also reflects the conservative Malay culture, with two entrances - the main entrance (Rumah Ansung) for male visitors and Rumah Siring for females.

UHTM Senior research Associate Prof Mohd Subrija Abd Rashidi and Perak Heritage Society president Irawati Siti Hadi led 10 members of the society on a visit of three of the 17 Kutai houses left in Perak.

The first house they visited was the Rumah Limau Kutai in Kampung Tringgor belonging to 87-year-old Mat Sani Mat Mansor.

The old-shaped woodwork and rough surfaces are reminders of the use of axes and traditional materials when building the house.

The group visited another Rumah Kutai in Selayang, Kota Kangsar, owned by ex-army personnel Mohd Sabirin Mat Yasin.

The house a 'holiday resort' for his children whenever they return from the city.

The unique feature of Mohd Sabirin's house is the use of bamboo shooting to support the main beams and wooden pegs instead of nails.

Mohd Sabirin said there were several abandoned Rumah Kutai which should be preserved.

"We need to educate the younger generation on how Malays lived in the 16th century," UHTM Special Interest Group has taken an interest in preserving and maintaining the Rumah Kutai as part of its efforts to create an awareness of our heritage," he said.

Wooden pegs are used instead of nails to hold the Rumah Kutai.