

Thumbs up for restoring Mahathir's first home

ALOR STAR, Thurs. — Villagers of Lorong Kilang Ais, Seberang Perak, here have given the thumbs up for plans to restore the house where Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was born.

They said the deteriorating condition of the attap-roofed house deserved better and the idea of restoring it was excellent.

The Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik yesterday said the house would be restored as a national historical site. He had also said the house would be a tourist attraction while it served to preserve local heritage.

Ice seller Abdul Kadir Che Mat Din, 35, said he was glad the house would be repaired because it was special.

Encik Abdul Kadir, who has been selling ice 100 metres from the house since he was 11, said: "Although I do not live near here, it is special to everyone in Kedah."

The house, numbered 18, is next to an ice factory with a narrow road leading to other houses.

However, weather and improper care since it was abandoned have taken its toll on it.

The house boasts of typical kampung architecture with its large windows.

Another resident, who preferred anonymity, said he said he had seen many of the Prime Minister's family members who lived in the house, the last was a relative who moved out about two years ago.

"It is good that the Government is repairing the house since it depicts the humble background of our Prime Minister.

"Tourists will be able to add another place to visit while ordinary people like us will know that Dr Mahathir is and always will be one of us," he said proudly.

Other buildings to be restored are the Merbok mosque in Kuala Muda and the late Tan Sri P. Ramlee's home in Penang.

The Ministry is keeping a lookout for sites and buildings of historical value and it has urged owners to let them know of such areas.