



■ The remains of four people — two senior citizens and two children — were found inside the house, which was burnt to the ground near a Chinese temple in Tanjung Sepat.

■ The victims were identified as Chia Tee Nang, 73, Lim Mai Shak, 68, Chia Yuan Bin, 3, and Ryan Chia Zeng Xi, 9.

■ Police have reclassified the case as murder following evidence found at the scene, including slash wounds on three of the victims.

■ Police believe that all the victims were murdered before being burnt.

■ Boy survived because he was hiding in the toilet.

INFOGRAPHIC NST

For Chia's old friends, nights will never be the same again

KUALA LANGAT: "The culprits are heartless."

Those were the words of a close friend of 73-year-old Chia Tee Nang, who died in the Tanjung Sepat fire yesterday morning.

The blaze, now suspected to be arson, shook the quaint and serene fishing village as villagers woke up to the horrific news.

Chia's wife, Lim Mai Shak, 68 and their grandchildren, Ryan Chia Zeng Xi, 9, and Chia Yuan Bin, 3, were also killed in the pre-dawn blaze when their home, along Jalan Tepi Laut, Kampung Tanjung Sepat, was razed.

One of Chia's close friends for over six decades, who wanted to be known only as Wong, teared as he sat near the home, watching family members search for belongings that could be salvaged.

"This is unfair and senseless. There is no need to set fire to the house. I have lost a brother today. We have known each other since we were very young.

"We grew up together here and we watched each other progress in life, from being bachelors to grandfathers. I am devastated," said the visibly shaken Wong.

According to Wong, it was routine for Chia and his childhood friends to have supper together. They have been doing so for the past five decades.

However, in the nights to come, life will never be the same again for these close friends.

Another good friend of Chia, who declined to be named, said they last saw each other on Tuesday night for drinks and parted



Relatives of the victims at Banting Hospital yesterday.

ways about 11pm.

"We would normally get on our motorcycles and head to a nearby coffee shop after dinner to spend a few hours together.

"Every night, without fail, about 10 of us childhood friends will gather and talk about everything under the sun.

"But from today onwards, everything will change. We will miss his presence. He was a cheerful and chatty person," he told the *New Straits Times* at the Banting Hospital mortuary.

He had accompanied Chia's two sons and family members to identify the victims' bodies.

He said he was awakened by the village fire alarm that rang about 5.30am.

"I rushed out of my house and

saw many neighbours. At that time, I did not know it was Chia's house that was on fire, and I thought it was just a minor fire.

"It was only later that I found out that Chia had died, along with his wife and grandsons. I was dumbfounded," said the close friend.

Meanwhile, Kampung Tanjung Sepat village head Tai Hoo Chong said the incident was the worst in the neighbourhood's history.

"The voluntary fire brigade activated the siren and I was told it was Chia's house that was burning. I rushed there but the fire was too intense.

"I have never seen a fire this big in our village. There was no way for us to rush in to save the family," said Tai.



'Victims may have been killed before fire'

BANTING: An elderly couple and two of their grandsons, who were thought to have died in a fire in Tanjung Sepat, Sepang, may have been killed before their house was torched, say state police.

Selangor Criminal Investigation Department chief Senior Assistant Commissioner Fadzil Ahmad said the victims had slash wounds on their bodies and police were investigating the case as murder.

"Initial investigations at the scene by the Fire and Rescue Department revealed that there was foul play. Checks on the victims by crime scene investigators found that three of them have slash wounds.

"We believe all the victims were

murdered before they were burnt. However, we will wait for a post-mortem to confirm the cause of their deaths," he said.

Fadzil said police were investigating the motive.

Firefighters found the bodies of Chia Tee Nang, 73, his wife Lim Mai Shak, 68, and their grandsons Chia Yuan Bin, 3, and Ryan Chia Zeng Xi, 9, who were cousins, after putting out the fire that razed the 24mx24m single-storey wooden house in Jalan Tepi Laut.

Fadzil said the police were informed of the incident about 5.50am. It is learned that another of the couple's grandson, aged 12, had fled from the house and was taken to a hospital.



Senior Assistant Commissioner Fadzil Ahmad