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Streets upgraded to lure tourists

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WHEN you think of local councils, one gets an image of an entity that provides services such as collecting rubbish, providing parking space and building playgrounds.

However, the Malacca Historic City Council, or MPMBB, has gone a step further by providing tourism facilities to attract more visitors.

For the past three years, areas within the council have been beautified with flowers.

Other than the usual historical spots, visitors now have more reasons to stay longer because the State has Jonker Walk, Taman Melaka Raya Walk and the recently-launched Hang Tuah Mall.

Credit should go to council president Mat Sirat Abu and his staff for providing these amenities and attractions.

It all started with Jonker Walk in busy Jonker and Heeren streets, which opened to the public in late 2000.

Originally mooted by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam, it seeks to attract more tourists here, especially at night.

Jonker Walk provides a chance for small businesses to stay open at night.

It is open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 6pm onwards.

Realising the success of the programme, the council decided to expand it by opening Taman Melaka Raya Walk, which is located on reclaimed land in Taman Melaka Raya.

The council again beautified the 1km street by putting up streetlights and decorated pavements.

Mohd Ali was on hand to officiate the walk on April 15 in conjunction with Malacca Historic City Day.

As for Hang Tuah Mall, RM8.5 million was spent to beautify Jalan Hang Tuah and its surrounding buildings.

Dubbed as a "Bukit Bintang Walk" in Malacca, the once sleepy area of Jalan Hang Tuah is made livelier with lights and stalls at night.

The Hang Tuah Mall was officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Oct 3.

Meanwhile, the council is cleaning up and beautifying Sungai Melaka with an allocation of RM91.2 million from the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry.

Work began in July and is scheduled to be completed by early 2005 where the back alleys of several roads fronting the river would be transformed into decorated pavements and streetlights put up to beautify the 3km stretch.

Dredging is being done to remove mud from the river.

Mohd Ali had a vision to transform the river into a Venice-like area.

Next year, the council is determined to get city status from the Housing and Local Government Ministry.