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Councillors' Europe trip under fire

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MALACCA, Fri. - A planned trip to Europe by Malacca Historic City Council members just weeks before their tenure as councillors ends has come under fire.

The proposed tour has raised questions on the need for such a trip which is expected to cost about RM300,000 of taxpayers' money.

The European jaunt, which is scheduled to take place in December, comes just months after the councillors went on a trip to Phuket and Yala in Thailand.

It is learnt the councillors were not happy with their Thai trip and, upon returning, pushed to go to Europe before their tenure ends in late December, as a parting gift for services rendered during their two years as councillors.

An expected 25 council members and a number of other officers are scheduled to go on the trip, which has been approved by the State Executive Council.

Social activist and Federation of Malaysian Consumer Association (Fomca) adviser Chua Kim Tee questioned the need for such a trip.

"This is an unnecessary trip which is going to cost taxpayers money. Whatever gained by the councillors is not going to be of use to the taxpayers as it is purely a paid holiday."

Chua, a former councillor in 1985 and 1986, said the council should use money budgeted for the trip to attend to more pressing matters like improving facilities at certain hawker centres here.

Malacca Historic City Council president Zaini Md Nor said the trip had been approved by the State Government, but details had yet to be worked out.

The issue has been raised just days after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged local councillors to buck up and refrain from doing things which could tarnish the Government's image.

Calling on those who failed to live up to expectations to leave, Dr Mahathir also suggested a more stringent evaluation mechanism to vet would-be councillors.

He also reminded local councillors that their inefficiency would hurt the Government in the long run.