

# Algerians urged to use M'sia as gateway

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ALGIERS: The Algerian business community has been invited to explore opportunities in Malaysia and use the country as a gateway to the Asean and East Asian markets.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who extended the invitation yesterday, said Algerian businessmen and investors were welcome to use Malaysia as a springboard to tap the Asean Free Trade Area which had a combined population of more than half a billion and a combined gross domestic product of US\$750bil (RM2,450bil).

He said businessmen from both countries could also work together to access the European Union and other African markets.

"Malaysia has a good track record as a manufacturing and export base for both regional and global markets.

"We also serve as a location for regional operations of many large corporations," he said at the start of the Malaysia-Algeria business dialogue here.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and more than 100 delegates including 50 prominent businessmen, is on a three-day offi-

cial visit to this north African country which started on Sunday.

Two MoUs were signed between Malaysian businessmen and their Algerian counterparts. Bernama signed an MoU with the Algerian Press Service on co-operation and news and picture exchange on a daily basis.

Another MoU was signed between RANHILL JAWALA CORP and E.P. ALGIENNE DES

Eaux on the treatment of water resources in Constantine.

During Dr Mahathir's talks with Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, he also broached the possibility of Malaysian banks opening operations in the country.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was keen to have a stronger business presence in northern Africa.