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## Algeria seeks Malaysian expertise, investments

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ALGERIA has expressed interest in learning from Malaysia's development, and getting Malaysian investment especially in the infrastructure and construction sectors.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who held a three-hour meeting yesterday at the Presidency, also discussed ways to increase trade.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, briefing reporters about the meeting, said Algeria had expressed particular interest in Malaysia's experience in building a knowledge economy.

"They want to learn from our experience with the Multimedia Super Corridor and Cyberjaya," he said.

Algeria has built its version of Cyberjaya in the new town of Sidi Abdellah, 25km from here. The town, built to relieve urban pressure on Algiers, has a cyber park.

Dr Mahathir visited the township yesterday afternoon.

Algeria was also interested in getting Malaysian investment in its housing sector, the construction of a new airport, port and highways, and rehabilitation of its water treatment system.

It was also keen to learn about Malaysia's privatisation process.

Syed Hamid said both leaders also discussed ways to boost economic and trade ties which lagged behind the close political ties.

At present, bilateral trade stands at about US\$100 million (RM380 million), heavily in Malaysia's favour.

To encourage direct trade, Dr Mahathir suggested having closer financial and banking ties including the establishment of a Malaysian-owned bank in Algeria. Algiers had no objections.

"Their talks touched on practical steps that could be taken," said Syed Hamid, adding that Dr Mahathir had instructed the Malaysian delegation to follow up closely on the discussions.

On international matters, Malaysia agreed to support Algeria's bid for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Malaysia and Algeria also agreed on the need for the world to return to a multilateral system and to support the United Nations if world peace is to be achieved.

After the meeting, Dr Mahathir and Bouteflika witnessed the signing of a trade agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Information and Communication Technologies.

Malaysia was represented by Syed Hamid while Abdelaziz Belkhadem, Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs, represented Algeria.

Earlier in the morning, Dr Mahathir laid a wreath at the Monument of the Martyrs (Maqam Syahid), a 100-metre high tower of concrete palm leaves.

The monument, dominating the eastern skyline of Algiers, was built in 1982 to mark the anniversary of the country's independence and remember those who died in the revolution.