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#### An anchor in North Africa

ALGERIA may not be as familiar to Malaysians as some other Muslim countries. But the older generation will remember that it was very much in the news in the 1950s because of its bitter war of independence against France. However, the North African state is set to become better known to us in the wake of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's official visit to the country. There are many areas in which Malaysia and Algeria can mutually benefit with the strengthening of relations. There is scope for expanding trade and economic ties. The fact that a business delegation accompanied the Prime Minister showed the extent of business and investment opportunities in that country. Although located in the African continent, Algeria is also close to Europe and can thus serve as a gateway for Malaysian entrepreneurs to both continents.

Algeria has its well-educated young and natural wealth. In a globalised and competitive world, Malaysia must continuously search for new markets and investment destinations as well as forging closer co-operation with friendly countries. Malaysia and Algeria can work closer to develop their IT and knowledge-based industries. Malaysia has rich experience in industrialisation, privatisation and investor-friendly policies, which it can share with the Algerians. Malaysia also has expertise in port operations, construction and property development.

With its sizeable manufacturing base, Malaysia can expand the range and volume of electronic, electrical and other products available to Algerian consumers. There should be a lot that Malaysia can invest in and import from Algeria. However, there must be follow-ups from Malaysian businessmen and their opposite numbers following the Prime Minister's visit. Tourism is another sector which is not only economically beneficial but will also foster people-to-people and cultural contacts.

On the political front, Malaysia and Algeria share common views, such as the need to restore the multilateral framework in resolving international issues through the United Nations. Both are firm in the fight against terrorism. More than economic gain can be achieved between these two modern, moderate and progressive Muslim countries, which regard each other in high esteem.