

# A giant push for growth

Star 21/2/93

By PAUL GABRIEL

**SUNGGAI PETANI:** Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad opened the mammoth Perwaja Rolling Mill yesterday, taking the country a step closer to achieving the aims of Vision 2020.

The mill, using the most modern equipment in the world, would also pave the way for the transfer of sophisticated technology for the benefit of the people, the Prime Minister said.

"What's significant is the mill will raise the standard of our technology, skills, research and technology and strengthen our export capacity.

"We will be edging closer to achieving the aims of Vision 2020," Dr Mahathir said.

The RM400 million Gurun-based plant, about 23km north of here, would also save enormous foreign exchange.

He said the demand for high quality steel was rising in the country and 200,000 tonnes had to be imported annually.

Present were Mentri Besar Tan Sri

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## PM: Steel exports will rise steeply

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Haji Osman Aroff, Perwaja Steel Sdn Bhd chairman Tan Sri Zainal Abidin Sulong, managing director Tan Sri Eric Chia, Italian Ambassador Luca Daniele Biolato and about 1,200 guests.

The fully-automated mill, built in 14 months over 263ha, can produce 450,000 tonnes of high quality steel wire rods and bars a year.

The total cost of the steel wire rod and bar mill, including land

and infrastructure, is RM685 million.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived in a Nuri helicopter after touching down at the Butterworth RMAF base, said Malaysia was categorised as a medium-level steel user but usage would rise at 25 per cent yearly for certain products and 10 to 15 per cent generally.

With the mill, exports of iron and steel products which had risen to RM1.06 billion in 1991 from RM250 million in 1981, would rise

steeply, he added.

Dr Mahathir assured other local steel manufacturers of their place in the market as Perwaja's production was specialised and not for construction.

"There is no cause for concern as the mill will only produce raw material for specialised items like springs, ball-bearings and hydraulic couplings," he stressed.

The Prime Minister later toured the mill.