

RAPID mechanisation had done harm to Malaysia because she is rich in manpower, a former member of Umno central executive committee, Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamed, said today.

As a result, Malaysia suffered from an unemployment problem, added Dr. Mahathir in a working paper presented at the Umno Youth seminar here today.

Dr. Mahathir, who spoke on "The effects of automation and unemployment", added that seen from all perspectives, the use of some machinery was not in the country's interest.

Symbol

In his 12-page paper, Dr. Mahathir said: "Very often developing countries will look upon developed nations to carry out their development programmes.

"While idolising the developed countries, economists and planners sometimes tend to believe that whatever is best for developed countries is best for the developing nation.

"For instance, the case of parking meters which were used recently in Kuala Lumpur and

MORIB, Sunday

Penang towns. To the officials this is a symbol of progress.

"What is the result of this? First the meter was bought from the West, made by their highly paid workers.

"Apart from the meters being bought with public funds, they also caused considerable unemployment among Malaysians.

Cheating

"But the officials did not realise that the meter did not have a brain. As a result, motorists cheated by putting in fake money.

"Now they have been replaced by parking attendants. The result: They are more efficient and they can tell us where there are vacancies and so on."

Dr. Mahathir stressed that the greatest benefit of using manpower was that the money could be used to create jobs for Malaysians.

He said that a machine costing \$120,000 was equivalent to the salaries for 1,000 workers for one month, or for 84 workers for one year.

This did not include the salary for the driver of the machine, the fuel

cost and expenses for its repairs.

From this it could be seen that this particular machine had thrown about 150 people into unemployment.

Dr. Mahathir noted that under the Second Malaysia Plan a lot of machinery would be bought from Britain, Germany, America and Japan.

"This may result in our workers being out of jobs, whereas their Western counterparts enjoy life," he said.

Dr. Mahathir, however, said that he was not against the use of some machinery "but we must think carefully before we buy it."

He added that history had shown that roads, dams, bridges and railway lines made by men were just as good and lasting as those made by the machines.

Readiness

The ploughing machine was among the machines that he was not against, Dr. Mahathir said. This was because for double-cropping in the Muda areas, all the buffaloes could not get the padi fields ready in time for planting.

Similarly, if more workers were brought from outside to work the fields instead of the machines then the income would not be sufficient for all the local farmers.