

# PM: WE'LL TALK TO U.S. GOVT

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By Wong Chun Wai

**KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the Government will deal with the Bush Administration directly to fight off attempts to get Malaysia's GSP status removed.**

"We will explain to the US Government the real situation and to urge it not to take any action (to withdraw the status)," the Prime Minister said.

He said the pressure groups involved in calling for the withdrawal of the GSP status had a narrow outlook and had not considered factors like the friend-

ship between the United States and Malaysia.

"They only keep harping that the rights of Malaysian workers have been allegedly violated ... but I want to know what actions have they taken against South Africa. Have they asked the US Government to cut off diplomatic ties with the South African Government?" he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to newsmen after witnessing a full-dress rehearsal of the opening ceremony of the G15 summit meeting in Parliament House.

He was commenting on reports that the International Labour Rights Education and Research Fund would file a petition against Malaysia and the electronics sector on June 1 to have the GSP status withdrawn.

This was despite an assurance from Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek to the fund's general counsel, Mr Terry Collingsworth, on Wednesday that the Government had always had the interests of workers at heart and that it had done much for them.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had been threatened by these groups because it had been liberal and regretted that certain Malaysians had supported their actions.

He said there was no point in giving workers all the rights to set up unions if they ended up losing their jobs: "If there is too much industrial unrest, workers might be retrenched while job seekers may not get work."

He said it was out-dated and no

longer pragmatic to resolve industrial differences through confrontations.

The Prime Minister said the country's economic growth would be seriously affected should factories start closing down: "Everyone would be affected ... the hawker, who sells food to workers, will also lose his income if workers have no jobs."

Investors, he said, had as much rights as workers and the role of investors must be recognised.

"If there are no investors, there will no workers and no jobs. There will be no economic growth and no development because there won't be enough taxation," he said.

He said the Government's policy on labour was to safeguard the interest of workers without affecting the country's economy.