

Dr M: Why American groups are lobbying against the GSP status

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Certain American groups are lobbying to have Malaysia's GSP status withdrawn because they want electronics firms to be relocated in their country, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the absence of a national electronics workers union here was just an excuse to remove Malaysia's GSP privileges and protect American electronic workers.

He was commenting on the petitions to withdraw Malaysia's GSP status or

privileges the country's electronic sector enjoys.

The latest petition was from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which wants Malaysia to stop enjoying the GSP for a list of electrical products.

The IBEW has claimed that 30,000 jobs were lost in the US telecommunications industry due to unfair competition from imports under the GSP.

Dr Mahathir said: "They wish to withdraw the GSP status so that our workers will be unemployed while theirs have

jobs."

And MTUC leaders were helping them, he told newsmen after launching national teachers' day celebrations at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Asked if he would hold talks with US President George Bush to explain the labour situation in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said he would do so "only if an opportunity arises."

"If I were to meet him (Mr Bush), the matter may be resolved, but come next year, the issue will again be raised be-

cause the GSP status is reviewed each year," he said.

Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz also criticised union leaders who she said had "opened the doors to this kind of petitions against Malaysia."

"We don't need our own people to initiate moves that are politically expedient to them but very damaging to the workers and the country," she said after meeting Australian Trade Negotiations Minister Dr Neal Blewett at her office here today.