

PM: THE BILL STAYS

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MALACCA, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the Government will not withdraw the Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill which is scheduled for debate in Parliament from Dec 5 to 8.

The Bill would also not be referred to a Parliamentary Select Committee, the Prime Minister said.

He said the Government had listened to the views of the people and had modified the Bill “to a state where it is necessary to be modified.”

“I don’t see the necessity to modify it some more, except to say that it should be left as it is,” he added.

“It seems to me those who are opposed to the OSA will be opposed to it no matter what we do. They never bother to study it or ask for any explanation.”

When asked about those who in Umno who are also opposed to the Bill, he said:

“Maybe in Umno too there are those who never study it.”

On Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang’s disagreement with the Government’s view that the definition of *official secret* in the Bill is less extensive than the present Act, he said:

“Maybe, as a lawyer, he knows better. I am not a lawyer but as far as I know, all government documents are secret.”

He declined to comment on his meeting with government backbenchers on the Bill next Monday.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after meeting State Umno leaders at Seri Bendahara here.

He had earlier held a close-door meeting with heads of department at the State Operations Room. Chief Minister Datuk Seri Rahim, Tamby Chik was also present.

Meanwhile, opposition to the proposed amendments continued.

Former Auditor-General Tan Sri Ahmad Noordin Zakaria said that if the Bill was

passed, it would appear that the Government had no trust in the people.

He said for any “good” government to exist, its leaders must have the trust of the ordinary man (see P2).

Former MCA president Tun Tan Siew Sin said if the Bill is passed it would “practically mean the end of democracy in Malaysia.”

“Even corruption can be classified as official secret,” the former Finance Minister was quoted by the *Daily Express* as saying.

Tun Tan, in Kota Kinabalu to open an insurance branch office, urged the Government to review the amendments, saying that “malpractices would remain hidden from the people if the Bill is passed.”