

Dr M: No further changes to OSA Bill

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MALACCA, Fri. — The Government will not withdraw or make any further changes to the proposed amendments to the Official Secrets Act (OSA), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This was because the Bill to amend the Act had already been modified as much as it could be, the Prime Minister added.

"I don't see any necessity to modify it further except to say that it should be left as it is," he

told reporters after meeting State Umno liaison committee members at the Chief Minister's official residence.

Dr Mahathir said the Bill had already been modified after being presented at the last sitting of Parliament before the recent general election.

This, he said, was in line with the Government's earlier promise to study possible changes to the Bill.

But, despite having honoured its promise, the Government "is still listening to what the people are saying."

On the rationale behind the Government's stand, he said it was convinced of the need for a law which would look to the needs of the people.

Asked if the proposed amendments would be referred to a select committee, he said: "I don't see the necessity as the Government has already listened to the views of the people. We have made the modifications."

Dr Mahathir felt that

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NOORDIN: P3

those who opposed the amendments would not modify their stand "no matter what we do."

He said the OSA critics never bothered to study the proposed amendments properly or ask for explanations.

On criticism within Umno to the amendments, he said: "Maybe they (critics from within Umno) have not studied the amendments too."

Referred to a recent statement by Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang that the amendments were more extensive than the existing regulations, Dr Mahathir said Mr Lim was a lawyer "and maybe he knows about this."

"I am not a lawyer but I know that any Government document is secret."

Asked whether there were signs of an upturn in the economy, Dr Mahathir said tin and palm oil prices had increased slightly.

However, he added, there were no indicators as to whether this upturn could be sustained.