

OSA stays, says Nazri

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THE government will not repeal the controversial Official Secrets Act (OSA) despite claims by certain quarters that it is thwarting efforts to combat corruption.

"We need the OSA to carry out the government's task efficiently and without disturbance," said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz in his reply to a supplementary question from Opposition Leader **Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur)**.

The OSA proscribes the collection, possession or distribution, directly or indirectly, of information to a foreign country.

Any public officer can declare any document or other piece of information an official secret - a certification that cannot be questioned in court.

Contravention of the OSA brings a mandatory one year to seven years' imprisonment.

Critics say the OSA has been used

At the Dewan Rakyat

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by the authorities to curb freedom of information and it contributes to corruption.

To an original question by **Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (BN-Gua Musang)**, Nazri said: "It is not true at all that the OSA is hindering efforts to combat corruption."

"The 1997 Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) Act has given powers to the ACA to view all documents categorised as OSA."

He said the ACA also has the right to investigate poison-pen letters.

Responding to Lim on the continuous slide of Malaysia's ranking in the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) 2006 conducted by the World Bank, the de facto law minister said the

government has taken note of the matter and will make efforts to improve.

The WGI painted a sober picture of global trends in governance.

Nazri also denied Lim's claim that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has lost grip of his administration.

"In the previous administration, there was dictatorship (and) people do not have freedom. Now people have freedom to speak up, it has been seen as out of control," he said.

“We need the OSA to carry out the government's task efficiently and without disturbance.”

- Nazri