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Mahathir-Budget

DAIM TO TABLE 2000 BUDGET ON FEB 29, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 20 (Bernama) -- Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin will table the 2000 Budget in the Dewan Rakyat on Feb 29, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Speaking at a news conference at the Parliament house here, Dr Mahathir said upon its tabling, the budget would be debated before being approved.

Daim had first tabled the 2000 Budget on Oct 29 but it was not passed by the ninth Parliament which was dissolved on Nov 11 to pave way for fresh general election on Nov 29.

This was the first time that the Malaysian parliament was dissolved prior to the passage of the federal budget, forcing re-tabling of the expenditure proposals on convening of the new parliament.

The prime minister said during the current four-day Dewan Rakyat sitting, beginning today, only provisions for the initial two or three months of government expenditures would be tabled pending the special sitting in February to pass the budget.

"These expenditures need no debating. They only need tabling before parliament for its approval," Dr Mahathir said.

The provisions tabled at today's House sitting for first reading were the Supply Bill 2000 and the Mara Institute of Technology (Amendment) Bill 1999.

Four other bills -- the Consolidated Fund (Expenditure on Account) Bill 1999, the Supplementary Supply (1999) (No 2) Bill 1999, the Income Tax (Amendment) (No 2) Bill 1999 and the Sales Tax (Amendment) (No 2) Bill 1999 -- will also be tabled, debated and approved during the current sitting.

These expenditures required urgent approval as "1999 is about to come to a close soon and we have to pay civil servants salaries", the prime minister said.

"We need to approve these expenditure allocations before the passage of the 2000 Budget in February," he said.

Dr Mahathir expressed regrets that opposition MPs deliberately created problems in the House by claiming that today's sitting ran contrary to the Federal Constitution.

"This (approving the expenditures) is a very crucial matter for running the country and I would have thought the opposition would give their cooperation for smooth running of the country.

"If they block these allocations, we can't pay government workers their salaries," he added.

At the outset of this morning's proceedings, Datuk Fadzil Nor (PAS-Pendang) questioned the legality of the sitting as Secretary to Parliament Datuk Mohamed Salleh Hassan read out a proclamation by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah on the convening of the first session.

-- BERNAMA

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