

Govt will defend budget from any criticisms - Dr Mahathir

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PUTRAJAYA, Nov 3 (Bernama) -- The government will defend Budget 2019, which is the maiden budget tabled under the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government, from any criticisms, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Mahathir, who is also PH chairman, said basically it was a big budget although certain quarters had anticipated otherwise.

“Many were thinking Budget 2019 would be a small one because the government is facing financial constraints.

“Instead we managed to expand the budget and we will defend it from any criticisms,” he told a press conference after chairing a PH Presidential Council meeting here today.

Budget 2019 tabled by Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday involves an expenditure of RM314.5 billion as compared to RM290.4 billion in Budget 2018. Of the amount, RM259.8 billion is for operating expenditure and RM54.7 billion for development.

Dr Mahathir said the feedback the government and the PH Presidential Council received was it (Budget 2019) was widely welcomed.

With the government facing financial constraints, Budget 2019 got an injection from Petronas amounting to RM30 billion to enable attention to be given to various segments of society, he said.

“Although the RM30 billion is huge we must remember the nation is facing a debt of more

than RM1,000 billion (RM1 trillion) , which is a problem that we will be saddled with in the long term.

“However, we discussed how to tackle part of the debt, thus enabling us to give attention to the people in the budget this time,” he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir said PH will organise a special dinner to collect funds to run the party on Dec 9 at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

Asked if it could be used by some to curry favour with the government by buying tables, the Prime Minister said it would not happen because the government practised open tenders for each project farmed out.

“Donors (buyers of tables) will not get special treatment to avoid PH from being influenced by companies or certain businessmen.

“Anyone can be a donor because booking of tables will have no bearing on government affairs. Tenders and approval of projects are handled by government officers,” he added.

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