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Sabah rights advocates feeling optimistic

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KOTA KINABALU: Sabah advocates championing state rights under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 are feeling upbeat after meeting Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohamad Apandi Ali last week.

A non-political grouping of prominent Sabahans called MySabah has been working together with the state and Federal Government to raise various points provided for under the agreement.

MySabah chairman Datuk Seri Anifah Aman, who is spearheading the talks at the federal level, said legal experts from MySabah as well as the Sabah government, had submitted strong arguments over the state rights issue.

"Our meeting has been very encouraging as Apandi said he would study the issues at hand.

"He (Apandi) believes that there is a case for Sabah," he said yesterday.

Anifah and Sabah Special Tasks Minister Datuk Teo Chee Kang, who heads the state Cabinet committee on state rights, met with Apandi on Wednesday.

Anifah, who publicly spoke of the meeting earlier this week, said he hoped Apandi would be able to provide a report by the end of the month to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak for the Cabinet to discuss the issues.

At the heart of the discussions was for the return of up to 40% of federal revenue derived from Sabah which is stipulated under the Malaysian Constitution.

"We are doing what is doable," Anifah said, adding that the process was legally complex although he expects some progress soon.

MySabah legal adviser Fuad Tengku Ahmad said the group discussed with Apandi over the return of legislative and administrative powers over electricity, gas generation and distribution.

"It is important that Sabah takes back its electricity, especially since the Sabah Electric-

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Datuk Seri Anifah Aman



city Sdn Bhd is facing challenging times," he said.

State rights under the Malaysia Agreement has been the key campaign of political parties in Sabah.

The Prime Minister has set up a high-level federal committee to discuss state rights with Sabah and Sarawak.

Although MySabah also includes local opposition leaders such as Sabah STAR president Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan, other opposition parties like Parti Warisan Sabah have been sceptical about the offers to restore state rights by Barisan Nasional.