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Focus group to be set up in Sabah

Members will comprise my deputy and electricity supply agency officials, says Dr Maximus

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KOTA KINABALU: A focus group is being set up to monitor Sabah's electricity projects as part of the Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry's measures to improve power supply in the state.

Its minister Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili said that the high-powered group would be headed by his deputy Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid and comprise officials from the Energy Commission, Tenaga Nasional, Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd (SESB) and related agencies.

The agencies are the Economic Planning Unit and Public Private Cooperation Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, Finance Ministry, Infrastructure Division of the Rural and Regional Development Ministry, Sabah State Economic Planning Unit and Sustainable Energy Development Authority.

Dr Maximus said that the group

would also include seven parliamentary backbenchers from Sabah Barisan Nasional's component parties.

"This focus group will study, monitor and advise on the planning and implementation of electricity projects in Sabah and report to me as the minister," he said after opening the Parti Bersatu Sabah's Tandek annual meeting in the district of Kota Marudu yesterday.

The group will keep a close watch on power generation, transmission and distribution projects, particularly those approved under the 10th Malaysia Plan, electricity tariff and SESB's turnaround.

"The Government is committed to addressing the electricity woes in Sabah and the formation of the focus group will step up these efforts," he said.

Dr Maximus noted that the problem was more critical in Sabah's east

coast districts such as Sandakan and Tawau as well as the interior towns.

He said that within the next three years, various measures would be in place to ensure that there was sufficient electricity supply in the state for the next decade.

The power supply woes in Sabah, he said, were also partly due to public

objections over certain measures and this had hampered the Government's efforts to tackle the problem.

Sabah's installed electricity capacity is at 1,344MW while available capacity is about 1,100MW.

The average daily power demand in the area ranges between 870MW and 950MW, but the available reserve is only between 20MW and 100MW.

The available capacity is lower than the installed capacity due to planned and forced power outages.