



01 JUN, 2025

WE NEED TO MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD

New Sunday Times, Malaysia



Early adopters of electric vehicles account for only three per cent of the market. NSTP PIX BY AMIRUDIN SAHIB

‘RIGHT TO CHARGE’ PART 3

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SHAMSUL YUNOS

FOR a large portion of Malaysians, the “Right to Charge” may seem like something that will be important in decades to come and not what we should be focused on right now — there are other more crucial concerns that need to be addressed. But here’s the reality: the change towards electric land transport is coming, and it is vital that we drive policy in a way that would make the transition as painless as possible. This isn’t about swapping internal combustion engines and fuel tanks with motors and batteries — this is a global shift to significantly improved energy efficiency that will save us money and reduce our dependence on imported fuel. Currently, out of every 100 units

of energy that we consume, nearly 70 per cent goes to waste. Why? Because we’re still using fire to extract work from petrol, diesel, coal, gas and methane. It’s an incredibly inefficient system that we’ve been stuck with. The time for a shift away from fire is here. Electric drive is cleaner, waste much less energy and that means it’s good for all of us. Meanwhile, that small number of Malaysians who already have electric vehicles (EVs) in their garages are enjoying significant savings on their energy bills, car maintenance cost and a dramatically better driving experience due to the lower noise levels and superior comfort. These early adopters represent just three per cent of the market — we sold less than 30,000 electric cars in 2024 out of 850,000 total vehicles

—but they’re already reaping the benefits of generous tax holidays and advanced technology. The global momentum behind this transition is undeniable. The technology is maturing rapidly, with batteries now offering 1,500km driving range and charging in under six minutes. Norway’s car market is nearly all electric now. China’s new energy vehicle sales increased 31 per cent year-on-year in May, outperforming traditional cars. Even BYD, the world’s largest EV maker, just announced price cuts of up to 35 per cent, making electric vehicles more affordable than conventional cars in some markets. This global shift has forced major brands like Toyota, Honda and Volkswagen to start producing electric vehicles locally in China to maintain market share.



The change towards electric land transport is coming.



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The benefit flows to consumers everywhere: cheaper electric cars for all. The question for Malaysia isn't whether this change will happen — it's whether we'll lead it or be left behind.

If we jump in early, we have a chance not just to help our automotive industry to transition in an orderly manner, protecting jobs and ensuring we have a stake in the technology, but also give Malaysians a better opportunity to take part in a sunrise industry.

In Malaysia, the infrastructure challenge represents our biggest hurdle and greatest opportunity.

The government wants to reduce the fuel subsidy, which demands RM80 billion of the country's annual budget, and shifting to electric vehicles will save everyone money.

Domestic carmakers like Proton and Perodua have the technical expertise to lead this transition and should take the lead.

Meanwhile, property developers should get together and come up with a solution that allows for individual condominiums and apartments access to charging. Without charging facilities, those shiny new high-rise buildings will become less desirable to buyers and investors.

Right now, progress remains slow because the government is unsure how to move forward. This is understandable because no country, other than Norway, has successfully converted its entire automotive market to electric.

Even China has achieved only around 35 per cent battery electric vehicle penetration and this is where ordinary Malaysians must step up and make it clear that we want to enjoy this new technology as soon as possible.



Electric vehicles are cleaner, as they waste much less energy. NSTP FILE PIX

sible.

As with any significant social change, we need about five per cent of the population to become activists — this is typically the percentage necessary to get government to notice and act decisively on anything.

Those in the government who are looking ahead already know this needs attention. Some have done their research, but without clear signs from the public that we want to make the shift, progress will slow to the usual governmental sluggishness.

The solution requires collective action. Ordinary Malaysians interested in an electric future should write to

their respective members of parliament about the "Right to Charge".

We must demand that Tenaga Nasional Bhd offer preferential tariffs during low-demand periods for EV charging. Additionally, property developers should integrate charging solutions into new developments, and local authorities must not drag their feet when it comes to charging infrastructure approvals.

We know Malaysians are savvy about saving money - solar installation allocations are snapped up immediately when available.

The same enthusiasm must be directed toward securing our electric

mobility future. The current window of opportunity won't remain open indefinitely.

The timeline for success is clear. Within the next two years, policymakers should finalise policy papers, new legislation and clear regulations to provide certainty for investors and consumers.

In the medium term, we need a sustainable incentive structure and comprehensive regulations that allow our transition to a more energy-efficient economy, saving money for everyone, including the government.

Most crucially, we need universal access to charging infrastructure



within 10 years if we're serious about halving our carbon footprint and achieving net zero emissions by 2045.

This includes mandating battery storage requirements for all new developments to help the country shift to renewable energy.

Energy efficiency should be a right, but it will only become a right if we demand it loudly, consistently and from every corner of Malaysian society.

The early adopters are already enjoying the benefits. The global momentum is unstoppable. The technology is ready. The economic case is compelling.

What we need now is at least five per cent of Malaysians to stand up and make their voices heard.

The infrastructure revolution that will define Malaysia's energy future for the next 50 years begins with individual citizens demanding change.

Everything starts with establishing a "Right to Charge" framework today, and that framework will only emerge when enough Malaysians insist that the status quo is no longer acceptable.

The choice is ours, and the time to choose is now.