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## Swift action urged to help rakyat manage rising fuel costs

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By RAHIMY RAHIM

**PETALING JAYA:** Immediate steps must be taken to cushion the impact of rising global fuel costs on consumers amid pressure on the global energy market due to escalating tensions in the Middle East, says the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca).

Its chief executive officer Dr Saravanan Thambirajah said proactive measures are crucial in protecting Malaysians from the rising cost of living driven by external uncertainties.

"We support the call by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for Malaysians to brace for a more challenging global energy landscape.

"The situation is shaped by fac-

tors beyond Malaysia's control, including geopolitical tensions, supply disruptions and volatility in fuel and energy markets," he said in a statement yesterday.

On Tuesday, Anwar said Malaysia's economy remains resilient despite rising global uncertainties, with the government widening its "Plan B" measures to ensure continued stability and growth.

Saravanan cautioned that a prolonged conflict would inevitably translate into higher fuel prices, electricity tariffs and increased costs of goods and services.

As such, measures such as the Bud195 initiative, along with targeted subsidies and assistance, remain critical interventions to ensure that the rakyat are better insulated against global price increases, he added.

"These efforts reflect the government's commitment to protecting consumers while managing broader economic realities," he said.

Saravanan also stressed the need for strong and continuous enforcement, particularly the close monitoring of supply chains and price movements, to prevent profiteering and unjustified price hikes.

He urged businesses to act responsibly, emphasising that any price adjustments must be justified and transparent, and not used as an opportunity for excessive profiteering.

Malaysian Consumer Friendly Association deputy president Azlin Osman welcomed the assurance from the Energy Commission that about 85% of domestic households will experience little impact

on their electricity bills due to the Energy Efficiency Incentive (EEI) mechanism.

"It's reassuring that about 85% of households won't see a significant increase in their electricity bills, which helps ease concerns among consumers," she said.

She added that the EEI was a good start for behavioural changes among consumers, particularly in the current situation.

"It may not drastically shift habits overnight but it does encourage people to be more conscious of their electricity usage, especially those with higher consumption," she said.

For lower-income households, the 600kWh level under the EEI should be sufficient to cover their basic needs, Azlin said.

On what consumers should do, she said it ultimately comes down

to them adopting simple, practical daily habits regarding electricity usage.

"This includes using energy-efficient appliances, switching off unused devices and being more mindful in the use of air-conditioning," she said.

Senior economist and policy specialist Dr Geoffrey Williams described the EEI as the right approach with regard to targeted subsidies and should also be adopted for petrol.

"It is essentially tiered pricing with no change in impact below 600kWh, which is very generous.

"It leaves 85% of people unaffected," he said when contacted.

He said adopting a similar approach for petrol would have a much more significant impact compared to the current model.