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Who pays for affordable energy?

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THE recent call by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, for Malaysia's energy transition to ensure affordability remains a key consideration alongside security and sustainability, is notable. But achieving all three at the same time is a delicate balance, and increasingly, a difficult one.

At Tenaga Nasional Bhd's Energy Transition Conference 2026 this week, the signing and exchange of multiple commercial agreements covering large-scale solar, floating solar and battery energy storage projects took place.

This is positive.

However, one gap in current policy thinking is the lack of focus on making rooftop solar more accessible and economically viable for ordinary Malaysians. For example, by enabling *kampung* households to rent out their roofs for solar installations, which could help widen participation.

Last year, the government launched the Community Renewable Energy Aggregation Mechanism (Cream) initiative, which allows rooftop solar from residential homes to be aggregated and supplied to nearby commercial users, enabling households to earn rental income from their rooftops.

However, early signs suggest it is not taking off, largely due to access charges that affect its overall viability.

Meanwhile, the country is actively attracting large-scale data centre investments, which is driving a sharp increase in electricity demand.

Although this supports economic growth and strengthens our position as a regional digital hub, it also tightens the overall power balance.

The push to grow data centres, accelerate industrial demand and keep tariffs affordable at the same time is increasingly pulling

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■ Energy transition strained by the need to balance affordability, security and sustainability amid rising demand

■ Lack of focus on making rooftop solar accessible and economically viable for ordinary Malaysians



the system in different directions. Even if renewable energy helps reduce long-term generation costs, the upfront capital required for new capacity, grid expansion and battery storage still needs to

be recovered through the system over time.

So, the one question keeps coming back: what does all this cost, and who pays?

This is the concern highlighted

by the prime minister, who stressed that policymakers cannot just focus on technology and large-scale achievements without considering the price ordinary people will ultimately pay.