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18 JAN, 2026

HYBRID INFLUX MAY STRAIN CHARGING NETWORK

New Sunday Times, Malaysia

Currently, there are about 1,900 direct current fast chargers, with some of the more popular spots reaching full capacity during long weekends. NSTP FILE PIX

SHAMSUL YUNOS

FOR 2026, the sale of battery electric vehicles (BEV) is expected to breach or at least come very close to the 50,000-unit mark, which will mean that by year end we will have about 120,000 BEVs demanding fast charging.

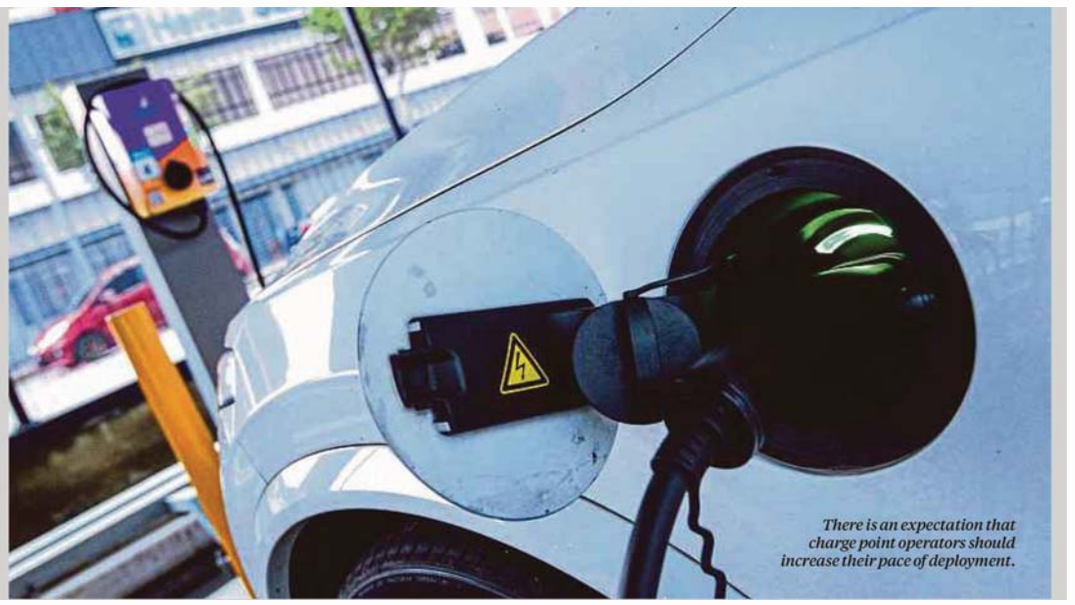
That number will encourage further investment in the nation's charging network and we need a boost in charging infrastructure this year.

The government's target for 10,000 chargers in 2025 was not met, especially for destination chargers or the slower alternating current (AC) chargers and it remains to be seen if the situation with AC chargers will change.

For charge point operators (CPOs), they seem to prefer the more expensive direct current (DC) fast chargers because they can serve more customers and sell more electricity within a given time, and therefore, enjoy healthier cash flow.

In the last quarter of 2025, Tenaga Nasional Bhd's Electron emerged as the rollout champion, opening more than 10 locations across Peninsular Malaysia in highly underserved areas, such as Kuala Selangor, Muadzam Shah, Kota Baru, Kulim and Bagan Serai.

To date, there are about 1,900DC fast chargers, with some of the more popular spots reaching full capacity during long weekends.



There is an expectation that charge point operators should increase their pace of deployment.

Some BEV buyers use their vehicles purely as urban runabouts and hardly ever drive them cross-country and almost never use DC fast chargers.

Meanwhile, plug-in hybrid EVs (PHEVs) are mostly marketed as long-range family vehicles, offering 1,000km range.

This means that most PHEV drivers will take weekend road trips, and because kilowatts miles are cheaper than petrol miles, they may be inclined to recharge along the highway.

This may result in a sudden surge in the number of charger users over the next 12 months, depending on the popularity of the more affordable PHEVs entering the market.

While BEV drivers have no choice but to recharge, PHEV drivers can choose how to extend their range. As a result, when PHEVs occupy charging bays, some BEV drivers may view this as an unnecessary use of an already limited charging infrastructure.

The fact is, both have a right to use the chargers regardless of whether one has an on-board generator or not.

We certainly do not want to see tempers flare at charging spots due to congestion. So there is an expectation that CPOs should increase their pace of deployment at a time when very few locations are breaking even.

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The increase in the number of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and electric vehicles will add pressure on the charging industry. NSTP FILE PIC

Encourage charger deployment at high demand areas

FROM PAGE 35

Perhaps the government should consider introducing incentives for CPOs to encourage charger deployment in the areas of greatest need, namely along major roads and highways.

Many are of the view that chargers should be concentrated on highways for maximum convenience but there is a case for encouraging off-highway charger locations.

Placing chargers in forgotten towns along trunk roads will help the local economy and reduce pressure on highways during busy periods.

It will help speed up EV adoption if the local populations see chargers being set up in their petrol station, shopping malls and other public places.

Because Muslim drivers make regular stops for their five daily prayers, mosques and surau (prayer halls) are ideal places to have chargers, as these stops typically last between 20 and 30 minutes.

Houses of worship of other faiths may also be good locations for charging pit stops.

The increase in PHEV numbers could make destination chargers more attractive to operators, as these vehicles are more likely to be taken on road trips and their drivers may look to extend their petrol range by recharging along the way.

The influx of PHEVs will put pressure on the charging industry. This can only be a good thing because the success of EV adoption relies on a well-planned infrastructure rollout and it does look like BEVs may have found an unlikely ally in plugged hybrids.

So the question is, how should the government implement an incentive system to guide the rollout so that resources are allocated to the right locations efficiently.

We will discuss that next week.