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A solar- powered cost cutter

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Users save more by generating own power and exporting excess

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PETALING JAYA: With rising electricity costs, rooftop solar is emerging as a hedge to help users cut expenses and protect against future tariff hikes.

For early adopters of the Solar Accelerated Transition Action Programme (Atap) scheme, the appeal is more on achieving consistent savings, rather than generating income.

Solar Atap is a rooftop solar scheme under the Energy Transition and Water Transformation Ministry enabling households and businesses to generate electricity and offset their bills by exporting excess power to the grid.

Vouching for the scheme, private sector employee Nazil Abdul Halim said his household power bill fell sharply with the installation of solar panels.

"I used to pay about RM450 a month for electricity but after installing solar under the Atap

scheme, my bill dropped to about RM120 most months.

"I don't get cash, but the savings are very real. The system generates electricity during the day, and whatever I don't use helps offset my bill. It is like locking in lower electricity costs long-term," he said when contacted.

For others like Siti Zuliha Ismail, the availability of financing options has made solar power more accessible.

The online product seller said she opted for a rent-to-own model instead of paying a large sum upfront.

"I didn't have RM30,000 to install solar, so I went for the rent-to-own plan. I pay about RM280 monthly, and my electricity bill dropped by more than RM350.

"I'm still saving every month. That's what convinced me. I'm not thinking about profit but about cash flow and right now, it's positive," she said.

Small business owner Farhan Muhd Shukor said the scheme works best for users with high

daytime electricity consumption.

"With Atap, I realised it is not about selling electricity anymore but using as much of your own solar as possible.

"My shop uses more power during the day, so solar makes sense. I'm cutting costs every month and am less exposed to future tariff hikes," she said.

Industry players say the shift reflects a broader transition in the national solar framework.

Gading Kencana Sdn Bhd managing director Datuk Muhamad Guntor Mansor Tobeng said solar energy could be a "financial shield" against rising electricity tariffs and global energy shocks, offering Malaysians more stable and predictable monthly costs.

He said the residential solar landscape has evolved through several phases, from the earlier Net Energy Metering (NEM) schemes to the current Atap mechanism.

Under NEM 3.0, users could export excess electricity to the grid on a one-to-one basis and

carry forward unused credits for up to 12 months. The scheme ended in June last year to be replaced by Atap.

Guntor said Atap placed greater emphasis on self-consumption, with exported energy now compensated at a lower system marginal price rather than full retail tariff. Unused credits are limited to a one-month carry-forward period.

"You don't get cash, but you get credits which equals savings," he said, adding that solar should be viewed as an income-generating asset that delivers both short- and long-term gains.

Guntor said rent-to-own models further lowered the entry barrier, allowing users to achieve positive cash flow even after monthly repayments.

He pointed out that reducing reliance on grid electricity helped users avoid additional charges embedded in electricity bills.

"In times of uncertainty, like with the ongoing Middle East conflict, this is your mitigation plan," he said.