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KUALA LUMPUR: Ministers can switch to electric vehicles (EVs) as a cost-cutting measure amid the global oil crisis but any such move must be supported by robust nationwide infrastructure, says Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani.

The Investment, Trade and Industry Minister said supporting EV adoption with strong nationwide infrastructure, such as adequate charging facilities, is necessary before wider uptake can take place.

"We need the public infrastructure. Where are you getting the public chargers? They must be available throughout the country, just like petrol stations.

"Only then will people feel comfortable using EVs," he said at a Concorde Club dialogue session at Wisma Bernama yesterday.

Johari was asked whether the government and Cabinet ministers are prepared to lead cost-cutting measures, including the use of EVs as their official cars, amid the global oil crisis.

"But if you do not provide the infrastructure, it will fail, even if you give a low price.

"It may be construed that everything is already taken care of by the government, and when they experience some problems, they will come back to the government and ask why the government allowed this," he said.

"My stand on this issue actually is – let's build the infrastructure together.

"Those people who want to use EVs, we welcome them. Those car manufacturers that want to produce EVs are also welcome.



Powering on: Johari (centre) speaking at the Concorde Club meeting in Kuala Lumpur. In attendance are *The Star* assistant news editor Rahimy Rahim (left) and Wong (right). – RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/*The Star*

"If they want to produce them overseas, they are subject to the same CBU taxes that we have. The rules apply equally to all countries in the world," said Johari.

Over the past four years, Johari said, the government has offered special exemptions for EVs.

"From 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025, those who brought in CBU EV cars enjoyed zero import duty, zero excise duty, and zero sales tax. That is how the government created a window for four years.

However, he said that, despite these incentives, the EV charging infrastructure has not expanded sufficiently, particularly in rural areas and kampung communities.

"Unfortunately, within those four years, we have not seen widely available infrastructure development, especially in rural areas, kampung areas and so on.

"Within this period, we have forgone about RM3.3bil in tax revenue," he said.

Johari said Malaysia is now focusing on strengthening its EV ecosystem, including encouraging local assembly (CKD) operations, while maintaining conditions for industry investment.

On a separate matter, Johari, who is also Umno's vice president, said political stability must be prioritised to address current economic challenges amid the ongoing global oil crisis and uncertainties.

"If you want to grow the economy or solve economic problems, the lack of political stability will make it difficult to overcome the challenges ahead of us," he said.

Johari said that the government's large subsidy bill is placing additional pressure on public finances.

"The subsidy – it's huge – so it is taxing on the government. It's all the more reason for real political stability in this country."

According to the Finance Ministry, the government is spending between RM6bil and RM7bil monthly on fuel subsidies.

The session, chaired by Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) Chairman Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai, discussed the topic "War and Tariffs: Our Response".

The Concorde Club is an informal group of editors and senior journalists who meet with politicians and key policymakers.