

## Oil Crisis: How It Affects Malaysian Society Today

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**ABSTRACT:** The ongoing oil crisis is significantly impacting Malaysian society, affecting every aspect of life, from the economy to daily routines. As fuel prices rise, individuals and families face higher living costs, straining their budgets and changing their consumption habits. Businesses, particularly those reliant on transportation and energy, are also feeling the pinch, leading to potential layoffs and reduced services. This crisis calls for urgent attention and action from all sectors to navigate these challenging times and ensure a sustainable future for Malaysia.

**KEYWORDS:** oil crisis, fuel price rise, challenge, sustainable future, Malaysian society

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### I. INTRODUCTION

An oil crisis is a critical situation that occurs when oil supplies are disrupted, or prices rise significantly in the global market. This can have far-reaching consequences for economies and consumers alike. Such a situation can significantly impact a nation's economy, as oil is a primary energy source for the transportation, industrial, agricultural, and power generation sectors. According to research by the International Energy Agency (IEA), fluctuations in the global oil market often stem from geopolitical conflicts, natural disasters, and imbalances between global oil supply and demand. An oil crisis affects not only oil-producing nations but also countries that rely on the import and export of petroleum (EIA, 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, the natural world and all its resources are a trust (\*amanah\*) from Allah (SWT) to humanity, acting as stewards (\*khalifah\*) on earth. Humans are required to manage these resources justly and prudently, while avoiding wastefulness (\*israf\*) (Khaleed & Ied, 2025). This is emphasized in Surah Al-Isra' (17:27), which states that the wasteful are the brethren of Satan, indicating that the squandering of resources—such as energy and fuel—must be avoided in daily life. Furthermore, Islam encourages the principle of moderation (\*wasatiyyah\*) in resource consumption. Effective energy management practices, characterized by efficiency and responsibility, are consistent with Islamic principles that emphasize promoting the common good (\*maslahah\*) and preventing harm (\*darar\*) to society. (Fathil, M, Sukendi, S, & Nizar, S., 2015). This framework advocates for the judicious use of energy resources, ultimately contributing to societal well-being and environmental sustainability. By prioritizing efficient energy usage, organizations can advance both their operational goals and their commitment to social and environmental responsibility.

In Malaysia, the oil crisis impacts society both directly and indirectly. Increased oil prices raise costs for transportation, services, and daily necessities. (BERNAMA, 2026). This situation can reduce consumer purchasing power and increase the financial burden on the public, particularly among low- and middle-income groups. However, the oil crisis has also prompted the government and the public to seek more sustainable energy alternatives and improve energy efficiency. (TERA, 2026). The Malaysian government has adopted various strategies, such as targeted subsidies, promoting renewable energy, and enforcing energy-saving policies, to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the population. (The Star, 2026). These efforts also align with Islamic principles that encourage the preservation of natural resources for future generations and the safeguarding of the community's well-being.

### II. THE OIL CRISIS: UNDERSTANDING ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR MALAYSIA

An oil crisis is a serious situation that can arise when crude oil supply is disrupted or when oil prices surge significantly. This scenario not only affects the economy but also has far-reaching consequences for people's daily lives. (EIA, 2023). Given that oil is a crucial energy source powering transportation, industry, agriculture, and power generation, any significant changes in oil availability or pricing can dramatically affect many facets of human life. (Adetunji, J., 2026) It's essential to understand the importance of stabilizing our oil supply to ensure a more secure and sustainable future for everyone.

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From a Malaysian perspective, the oil crisis also affects the public, as many sectors rely on petroleum-based fuels. When oil prices rise, transportation and production costs also increase. This situation drives up the prices of goods and services, thereby raising the cost of living for the people. (Rachel, G & Muhammad Najib. 2026). An oil crisis can profoundly disrupt the economy, igniting a wave of inflation characterized by a persistent rise in the prices of goods and services. (Emilia, T., 2026). As producers grapple with soaring operating costs, they are often forced to pass a portion of these costs on to consumers. This transfer results in a noticeable erosion of purchasing power, leaving individuals and families struggling to afford everyday necessities such as food, housing, and transportation. (Ahmad, A., 2025). Beyond the impact on consumers, an oil crisis also creates significant hurdles for businesses and the job market. Companies with significant fuel requirements in sectors such as transportation, manufacturing, and logistics are increasingly challenged by rising operational costs. (Cherif, B., 2026). These financial pressures can lead to difficult decisions, as businesses may be compelled to slash budgets, halt expansion plans, or even downsize their workforce to cope with mounting losses. In this way, an oil crisis not only challenges the economic stability of regions but also threatens the livelihood and security of countless workers, highlighting the urgent need for strategic responses to mitigate such crises in the future.

### **III. OIL CRISIS: HOW IT AFFECTS MALAYSIAN SOCIETY TODAY**

The oil crisis has a clear impact on Malaysians, particularly when geopolitical tensions in West Asia disrupt global oil supplies. Among the issues linked to the global oil crisis that affect Malaysians are:

#### **A. Rising Private Transportation Costs for Malaysians**

Malaysians rely heavily on private vehicles, making the country more vulnerable to price shocks and disruptions in the global oil supply. In his report titled "From the Outside In: US-Iran Geopolitics and Malaysia's Energy Vulnerability," Khazanah Research Institute (KRI) researcher Azfar Hanif Azizi noted that although Malaysia has implemented various policies over the past few decades to diversify its energy sources, the transport sector remains heavily dependent on petrol and diesel. This constitutes a key weakness in the nation's energy resilience. (Azhar, 2026). Data compiled by the Road Transport Department for May 2026 alone reveals that 117,296 petrol-powered vehicles and 2,049 diesel-powered vehicles were registered in Malaysia. (data.gov.my., 2026). This finding supports the accuracy of Azfar Hanif's report, which indicated that 81.1 percent of car sales in 2025 were petrol vehicles, and further demonstrates that this trend is increasing. Meanwhile, the high rate of private vehicle ownership among Malaysians also stems from years of insufficient and delayed investment in urban rail systems, as well as a lack of systematic management to curb the influx of vehicles into city centers. (Nur Fareza, 2024).

#### **B. Impact on Plastic Supply Production**

Crude oil is used not only as fuel but also as a key raw material in the petrochemical industry (PGN LNG, 2026) for producing plastics, resins, synthetic rubber, and clothing fibers. When an oil crisis occurs, the production costs for these synthetic materials rise. This trend has a direct impact on consumers, as the prices of everyday items, including plastic water bottles, food containers, and plastic components in household appliances, increase accordingly. (Uhler, A. 2022). In an article published by Harian Metro on April 24, 2026, the Minister of Energy Transition and Water Transformation stated that the plastic manufacturing process relies on raw materials such as naphtha, ammonia, ethylene, and propylene, which are derived from oil and gas. (Harian Metro, 2026). During a Global Supply Crisis briefing broadcast on local television, he argued that "plastic is a fundamental component of daily life, including food packaging, consumer goods, and healthcare equipment" (The Star, 2026).

Local plastic container manufacturers have increased wholesale prices in response to higher production costs for petrochemical-grade plastic resin. As a result, retailers have raised packaged food prices to offset higher plastic container costs and prevent financial losses. Prices for specific resin grades have reportedly exceeded US\$2,000 per tonne, representing an increase of over 100 percent. (The Malaysian Reserve, 2026). This surge is attributed to a conflict that disrupted the flow of crude oil and petrochemical materials through the Strait of Hormuz, affecting upstream supplies for resin production. (Cyprus Inform, 2026). If the oil crisis continues, Malaysians may soon notice its effects in everyday life as the plastic manufacturing industry faces ongoing uncertainty in the coming months and years.

#### **C. Impact on Aviation Sector**

Jet fuel, which comes only from petroleum, makes up about 40% to 45% of local airlines' operating expenses on average. (Izzul, 2026). Meanwhile, 60% to 70% of the airline's total costs are paid in US dollars, according to Hong Leong Investment Bank Research. (Kang, 2026). These numbers show the airline's overall running costs. During oil crises, fuel prices rise sharply. Because of this, both local and international airlines usually pass these extra costs to customers by increasing ticket prices or adding fuel fees.

Malaysia-based airlines are highly sensitive to oil price fluctuations due to their relatively low earnings base. They are no longer able to generate profits in the billions of ringgit as in previous years. As a result, a substantial increase in oil prices, which can

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constitute up to 60% of operating costs, will hurt these airlines. Still, the real impact will likely stem from rising jet fuel prices, not from rerouted flights or cancellations, as Malaysian Airlines rarely operates in the Middle East, according to Shukor Yusof of Endau Analytics, an analyst and journalist specializing in the aviation industry. (Kang, 2026). This affects Malaysians' ability to travel and places a burden on students or workers who frequently fly between the Peninsula and Sabah or Sarawak, or even abroad. For instance, a Malaysian wishing to return to their hometown in Kuching from Kuala Lumpur during the festive season found that flight ticket prices had doubled compared to the previous year due to skyrocketing aviation fuel costs. (Mahaiura, 2026; Peter, 2026).

### **D. Impact on the Tourism Sector**

If airfares increase, travel that was previously affordable may become prohibitively expensive for certain individuals. (BBC World Service, 2026). Consequently, tourism businesses will likely be affected by the conflict in West Asia. Many travelers are reconsidering their plans, particularly for long-distance destinations. Some are postponing vacations, while others are opting for destinations closer to home. (Reeracoen, 2026). Sabah's Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, Datuk Jafry Ariffin, said the rise in fuel prices directly affects operating costs, particularly in the tourism industry's transport sector. He made these remarks while speaking to reporters at the Sabah State Government's Aidilfitri Open House held at the Sabah International Convention Center (SICC) here on Saturday. When asked if the impact was already being felt in the tourism sector, he noted that the situation was beginning to affect industry operators, given the sector's role as a major economic contributor in Sabah. (Asyikin, 2026).

Rising oil prices indirectly affect the economy by increasing the cost of goods and services. As transportation costs rise, so do the costs of delivering food, hotel supplies, and other commodities. Some accommodation providers may raise room rates, while restaurants increase food prices and service charges, and tourism activities become more expensive. (Razali, 2026). For instance, someone wishing to attend a concert might have to pay two to three times the standard price if booking just a week before the flight. Consequently, consumers now need to plan and book tickets seven to nine months in advance to secure the lowest rates, or risk not going at all if they miss the promotional period. This situation demonstrates that travelers are paying more not only for the journey itself but for the entire vacation experience. Overall, the cost of tourism is rising, a trend that could alter consumer behavior. (Ping-Tsan, H., Minh-Thu, H. & Meng-Li, H. 2024).

## **IV. INITIATIVE, STRATEGIES, AND PLAN**

The oil crisis in Malaysia constitutes a significant economic challenge that requires coordinated attention from the government, industry stakeholders, and the general public. The nation's significant dependence on fossil fuels exposes the domestic economy to the risk of imported inflation and undermines long-term fiscal sustainability as subsidy burdens increase. (Ganesha, 2026). Addressing this crisis holistically requires a comprehensive paradigm shift. Here, we examine several measures to tackle the oil crisis.

### **A. Using Biodiesel as an Alternative Fuel to Petroleum**

According to an AWANI article, biodiesel has significant potential as a practical alternative fuel source to mitigate the effects of the oil crisis in Malaysia. Minister of Economy Akmal Nasrullah Mohd Nasir indicated that biodiesel can be integrated into existing diesel systems, especially within the logistics, agriculture, services, and transportation sectors. (Ernadya, P., 2026). During the Global Energy Crisis Briefing, he stated, "The National Economic Action Council (MTEN) has agreed in principle that biodiesel is one of the alternative biofuel sources and the most practical and ready-to-implement option for the near term. The government must also select measures that can be mobilized immediately, yield direct results, and leverage existing domestic capabilities. (Akmal Nasrullah, 2026). He explained that current data indicates the country is well-positioned to accelerate implementation, noting that Malaysia's projected biodiesel production for 2025 stands at 975,207 metric tonnes against a production capacity of 2.36 million metric tonnes. According to him, this situation demonstrates that the industry fundamentals, supply chain, and blending capabilities are already in place; they require systematic strengthening to deliver greater benefits to the nation. Meanwhile, the biodiesel blending rate is transitioning from B10 to B15—starting with a B12 blend—an upgrade approved by the government that incurs no additional costs, as it utilizes existing blending infrastructure." (Akmal Nasrullah, 2026). "The ongoing implementation of the B10 mandate demonstrates that the necessary foundation for its execution is already in place," he said. He noted that the government views biodiesel usage as a means to extend the nation's diesel supply, supported by biofuel mitigation plans, the phased upgrading of B20 and B30 depots under the 13th Malaysia Plan (RMK-13), and preparations for a B30 mandate for the commercial and public transport sectors. (Akmal Nasrullah, 2026). The government will also engage with the Oil Industry Technical Committee (OITC) to ensure the smooth implementation of the policy. These proactive measures are expected to extend the country's diesel supply, thereby strengthening economic stability and safeguarding Malaysia's energy security. (Akmal Nasrullah, 2026; Tarrence, 2026).

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### **B. Strategic Shift to Energy-Efficient Vehicles (EEVs) and Electric Vehicles**

A planned move to electric cars, hybrids, and solar power offers another option in the larger effort to change how we use energy. (Narayan, A., 2018). This transition is being accelerated as it is deemed crucial for the nation to navigate the global energy crisis more effectively. Furthermore, this shift helps reduce public reliance on fossil fuels—resources that will inevitably dwindle over time. (Amar, 2026). Intan Marzueani, Principal Assistant Director at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, believes the transition to alternative energy is urgent, given that oil and gas supplies are not always guaranteed. “Oil and gas supplies are not guaranteed in the long term. Therefore, we need to seek alternatives to these sources, including encouraging Malaysians to switch to electric vehicles (EVs) and hybrids as a measure to address the impact of rising oil prices,” she said. (Berita RTM, 2026).

To support this agenda, Malaysia needs to expand the use of solar energy and strengthen EV charging infrastructure. For instance, the city of Shenzhen in China has demonstrated the effectiveness of this transition through the widespread adoption of EVs, including within its major public transport systems such as buses. (Berita RTM, 2026). This shift towards this technology is highly beneficial, as it helps reduce pollution and supports environmental sustainability. A relevant local example is the automaker Perodua’s plan to locally produce the hybrid Atila model (BERNAMA, 2026), while Proton Holdings has launched the Proton e.Mas 7—marking a historic milestone in the nation’s automotive sector as Malaysia’s first homegrown electric vehicle. (Proton e.MAS, 2024). This initiative highlights Proton’s dedication to achieving its objective of launching electric vehicles by 2025. Overall, the success of the nation’s energy transition relies on public cooperation in adapting to new lifestyle norms that align with evolving national and global trends.

### **C. Reducing the Use of Single-Use Plastics in Daily Life**

Although often dismissed as trivial, reducing plastic consumption in daily routines during an oil crisis yields benefits that extend beyond environmental protection; such practices can also safeguard the economy and energy security. (Abhishek, 2026). As is widely known, plastics are petrochemical products derived from crude oil and natural gas. (Narendra. S, et al., 2022). When fuel supplies are limited, reducing plastic consumption enables a greater share of crude oil resources to be allocated to essential sectors, including transportation and power generation.

Carrying a reusable bag, such as a foldable fabric or canvas tote, in a handbag or backpack makes it easier to refuse plastic bags when shopping. (Wong, 2017). Additionally, using personal food containers for takeaway meals or packed lunches is recommended. This practice reduces the accumulation of polystyrene containers and clear plastic packaging and also minimizes health risks associated with plastic chemicals leaching into hot food. (Chingakham, C. et al., 2025; GD, 2026). If these practices are adopted on a large and sustained scale, demand for petroleum-derived products can be reduced, lowering industrial crude oil consumption for plastic manufacturing and alleviating pressure on the global oil supply chain.

### **D. Strengthening Daily Financial Management**

The cost of living—such as food and logistics prices—typically rises due to volatile oil prices. This is where financial management comes into play. Creating a dedicated emergency fund for oil-related crises, financed by allocating a portion of monthly income, can cover unexpected expenses, including higher transportation costs. (Upstart, 2026). This approach reduces reliance on primary emergency savings or essential budgets, as the required funds are pre-allocated.

Islam also places great emphasis on preparing for the future. Prophet Yusuf (AS) devised a seven-year storage strategy to withstand a prolonged drought. In this context, it is recommended that Muslims maintain savings sufficient to cover at least three to six months of living expenses. (J. Ahmed et al., 2014). These savings are not for indulgence but serve as a financial safety net in the event of job loss or sudden price hikes caused by protracted conflicts. By combining financial management discipline, the virtue of *\*Qanaah\** (contentment), and a spirit of solidarity, Muslims can not only weather economic turmoil but also emerge as a capable, self-reliant, and respected group within the global economic landscape. (A. Muhajir et al., 2022). Remember, every financial decision we make today reflects our devotion to Allah and our concern for the *\*Ummah\**. Manage your wealth wisely and with faith, so that it may stand as a witness in our defense before Him in the Hereafter.

### **E. Implementing Work-from-Home Practices**

The practice of working from home is one of the initiatives actively promoted by the government to explore more flexible work arrangements. (HRSEA, 2026). This approach has demonstrated significant effectiveness in mitigating the consequences of oil supply disruptions caused by the conflict in West Asia. While this practice recalls the unforgettable experience of working during the Movement Control Order (MCO), it has shown that many individuals remain committed and effective in these circumstances. Tengku Mohd Ikram Tengku Ibrahim, the Chief of Protocol at Malaysia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commonly known as Wisma Putra, regards the initiative as a forward-thinking approach, especially in terms of addressing fuel consumption. He emphasizes the importance of proactive measures that can lead to more sustainable practices in the sector. He stated, “I believe this is a good

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measure; based on my professional experience, it helps significantly in terms of weather conditions, energy, and petrol usage. In the current climate of rising oil prices, this step aids in cost savings. It benefits not only the employees but also allows the government to reduce petrol consumption and facility-related costs at their respective workplaces." (Berita RTM, 2026).

### V. CONCLUSION

The oil crisis represents a multifaceted challenge that affects nearly every aspect of life in Malaysia. Price volatility and disruptions in the global oil supply, driven by geopolitical conflicts in West Asia, supply-demand imbalances, and market speculation, have increased transportation costs, raised prices for petrochemical-based goods such as plastics, and placed significant strain on the domestic aviation and tourism industries. As a result, the cost of living continues to escalate. Stakeholders are therefore urged to transition from traditional management practices to more strategic, resilient, and comprehensive approaches.

From an Islamic perspective, this crisis offers vital spiritual and practical lessons regarding governance and environmental sustainability. Petroleum and the earth's mineral resources are, in reality, public assets and a trust from Allah SWT, entrusted to humanity to be managed with justice and wisdom. Any form of wastefulness in daily energy consumption is prohibited; furthermore, the values of moderation and social concern for the affected groups are essential to uphold the common good and prevent systemic harm. Within the framework of *\*Siyasah Syar'iyah\** (Islamic governance), government efforts to implement policies such as targeted subsidies must remain dynamic and subject to critical review to ensure that vulnerable groups—such as the lower-tier M40—are not neglected.

Therefore, strong collaboration among the government, industry, and the public is key to navigating an uncertain future. Proactive measures—such as accelerating the transition to energy-efficient and electric vehicles, maximizing the potential of domestic biodiesel, reducing reliance on single-use plastics, and improving daily financial management through the use of public transport—must be translated into concrete actions. By integrating modern economic principles with comprehensive Islamic values, Malaysia can build a self-reliant energy and economic ecosystem, ensuring societal well-being and environmental sustainability for future generations.

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