

SPEECH for WOMEN IN RAIL MALAYSIA CONFERENCE 2025

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VENUE: THE MAJESTIC HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

Salutations:

- Puan **Natasha Zulkifli**, the Founder Director of Women in Rail Malaysia.
- Distinguished speakers who have shared their wisdom today.
- Captains of industry, partners, and supporters.
- Members of the media.
- And especially the aspiring leaders and students who have been part of this important day.
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Salam Sejahtera dan Salam Malaysia MADANI

A very good afternoon to all of you.

1. It is a true honour to be here with you to close what I understand has been an insightful and impactful conference. I want to congratulate Natasha and the entire Women in Rail Malaysia team. Each year, you raise the bar, and this conference has once again proven to be an essential platform for our nation's rail industry.
2. To see this room still filled with so much energy at the end of a long day is a testament to the quality of the dialogue you have fostered.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. You began this conference by setting a powerful stage. I concurred that as Malaysia assumes the ASEAN Chairmanship, we are at a global crossroads where rail is no longer just infrastructure, but a **strategic enabler** of our economic resilience. I admit that we must challenge ourselves to build rail systems that are **future-ready, adaptive, and deeply embedded within an ecosystem of innovation, trade, and human capital.**

4. Throughout the day, you have explored this theme from every angle. You have heard from our friends in the Philippines, Japan and the UK about their transformative journeys. You have delved into the incredible potential of AI and smart city integration. You have debated our own progress. The conversations you have had today all point to one undeniable conclusion: our most critical infrastructure is, in fact, our human capital.
5. Our ambition as a nation is clear. We are pushing forward on multiple fronts. We are advancing the monumental **East Coast Rail Link (ECRL)**, which will reshape our national logistics backbone. We are realising new urban mobility solutions like the **LRT3 or Shah Alam Line, Penang LRT** and the **Johor Bahru Elevated ART as addition to our current LRT and MRT ecosystem in Klang Valley**. And in Sarawak, the **Kuching Urban Transportation System** is setting a benchmark for green technology.
6. But these megaprojects will only succeed if we have the people to power them. The question is no longer *if* we should invest in talent, but *how* we can do so decisively and strategically.

7. For too long, this has been a topic of discussion. But inspired by the advocacy of Women in Rail Malaysia and the urgent conversations from today, I believe it is time to move from discussion to action.

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. Natasha, in her opening remark, inspired us with the introduction of Rail Industry Skills and Education Policy or RISE Mandate by Women in Rail. We are very supportive of the skills enhancement agenda in rail development and we encourage Women in Rail to work together with Ministry of Transport to ensure skills enhancement is embedded as part of our transportation policy.
9. Under RISE Mandate, Women in Rail proposed significant weightage or scoring of major rail projects will be given to bidders that committed to skills enhancement and building a comprehensive talent pipeline. This includes funding world-class education through university scholarships with TVET institutions as well as providing quality internships and industrial training.

10. This initiative underscores our industry's commitment to being future-ready, inclusive, and innovative—building not just infrastructure, but human capital that will propel Malaysia forward.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. One of the most inspiring highlights from today's programme was seeing Women in Rail Malaysia practice what it preaches. I must applaud you for the groundbreaking initiative of giving students complementary seats and, even more impressively, a voice on stage.
12. Let me be clear: **no other conference organiser in this industry is doing this.** You are not just talking about the next generation; you are empowering them. This is visionary leadership.
13. To the students here: I hope today has shown you that a career in rail is a career at the cutting edge of technology and nation-building. We are now putting in place the policies to ensure there is a place for you in this future.

14. As we bring this conference to a close, let our work not end here. Let the ideas, the partnerships, and the inspiration from today fuel our actions tomorrow. You have successfully charted a path towards a more connected, future-ready Malaysia. Now, let us walk that path together.

15. The era of building just tracks and stations is over. With the RISE Mandate, and with partners like Women in Rail Malaysia, we will now build talent. We will build careers. And together, we will build the future of Malaysia.

16. Thank you once again for an outstanding conference.

(End Speech)