



Dr Wan Azizah (seated, centre) with invited guests and attendees of the Women Economic Forum Asean 2025 event held at the Miti building in Kuala Lumpur. — Photos: Bernama

A NEW whole-of-society approach is needed to empower women across all economic sectors to unlock the full potential of the “sheconomy”.

This, Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Maimunah Mohd Sharif said, would drive inclusive, sustainable development in the Asean region.

She said women must be included in decision-making spaces and recognised as key architects of change, especially in city-level transformation where daily life is most affected.

“The ‘sheconomy’ is not a parallel economy. It is a reimagining of our whole economy, powered by inclusion.

“Inclusion is not charity; it is good policy,” she said in a Bernama report.

Maimunah was speaking at a plenary session titled “Asean Women Leading Social Change: Integrating Social Goals with Economic Growth in the ‘sheconomy’”, at the Women Economic Forum (WEF) Asean 2025 held at the Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti) building in Kuala Lumpur.

Maimunah, a former executive director of UN-Habitat, said it was key to embed gender equity into urban governance, budgeting and service delivery.

She said this aligned with the Asean Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021-2025 and stressed the importance of having Kuala Lumpur put the framework into practice by ensuring better housing, transport and public health policies serve women.

Maimunah also shared initiatives by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) through the Safe City Programme, which includes the installation of 10,000 closed-

# KL mayor: Include women in decision-making spaces

## Academia, public and private sector also crucial to unlocking potential of ‘sheconomy’



(From left) Deputy Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Liew Chin Tong, Maimunah, Dr Wan Azizah, Noraini and Asean 2025 WEF president Datin Hartini Osman at the Women Economic Forum Asean 2025.

circuit television (CCTV) cameras and improved street lighting.

“These efforts are not just for safety, but for dignity and inclusion.

“We are creating safer zones, better transit points and walkable neighbourhoods centred on

women’s mobility.

“In 2024, crime dropped by 15% in the upgraded areas and women reported feeling safer,” she said.

Despite the progress, she said only 10% of local councils in Malaysia are led by women.

Maimunah added that the private sector plays a crucial role in unlocking the potential of the “sheconomy” by elevating women into leadership positions, fostering inclusive innovation and building supportive workplace cultures.

“Gender-smart investing, mentorship programmes and targeted support for women-led start-ups, particularly in the green and digital sectors, are how we activate the ‘sheconomy’.

“Academia plays a part too, by producing gender-disaggregated data, training women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), governance as well as documenting what works.

“Communities must be empowered. Women entrepreneurs, mothers and youth must be recognised, not just as participants, but as planners and leaders,” she said.

Maimunah, who is Kuala Lumpur’s first female mayor, said since joining DBKL in August last year, strides had been made to close the leadership gap.

She said currently, women make up 29.3% of DBKL staff, 43.6% of professionals, 44% of department heads and 40% of top management, surpassing the 30% benchmark for women representation in top management roles.

Maimunah was also conferred the “Women of the Decade” award alongside Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Noraini Ahmad by the Prime Minister’s wife, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.