

Shahrizat: More women needed in engineering

KUALA LUMPUR: The scarcity of women in technical fields such as engineering has contributed to a shortage of skilled workers in related industries.

Women Entrepreneurship and Professional Development adviser in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said the lack of gender diversity in the technical sector did not augur well for the economy.

Even though a large number of women was enrolled in institutions of higher learning, she noted that their participation in engineering, manufacturing and construction was very low.

"Stem (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) remains a very male-dominated field in Malaysia and worldwide," Shahrizat said after launching the Women In Engineering International Leadership Summit 2017 here yesterday.

"Although women dominate, with more than 60 per cent of enrolment in our higher education institutions, this is not the case in the engineering, manufacturing and construction departments in our public universities.

"It is worse in the labour market as women tend to choose non-engineering areas."

Shahrizat said the United Nations Educational, Scientific and



Tan Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil (centre, in blue) at the launch of the Women In Engineering International Leadership Summit 2017 in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY NURUL SYAZANA ROSE RAZMAN

Cultural Organisation (Unesco) reported last year that only 39 per cent of Malaysian engineers were women. She said there was a need for a concerted effort to recruit women for the engineering field.

"Without gender parity, Malaysia

is missing out on half of its potential engineering and technology workforce."

Shahrizat commended the efforts made by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers to recruit and retain women in engineering.

She urged employers to transform the workplace into a more family-friendly environment to accommodate the needs of women.

"It is about gender sensitising the workplace and having an accommodating work environment

for women and family across the board, from technicians to leadership positions.

"We need more female role models — successful women who can show that engineering offers exciting and bright career prospects," Shahrizat said.