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PRIORITISING RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION IN MALAYSIA: ALIGNING WITH MAQASID AL-SHARI'AH AND UNITED NATIONS' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract*: In Malaysia, the Federal Government invests heavily in railway and road transportation networks that connect cities, a significant financial commitment that has strained the public budget. Given the increasing pressure on public funds, assessing the effectiveness and alignment of these transportation modes with broader societal and global objectives is essential. This article examines the alignment of Malaysia's railway and road transportation systems with Maqasid al-Shari'ah. Maqasid Shari'ah's theory also aligns closely with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The article argues that railway transportation better supports Maqasid Shari'ah than road transportation, particularly regarding environmental sustainability, public safety, and resource efficiency. In light of these considerations, the article advocates for the Federal Government to prioritise investment in railway infrastructure. Such an approach would promote adherence to Islamic law and contribute to global efforts for sustainable social, economic, and environmental development. This study advances policymaking by providing a comprehensive framework for integrating Maqasid al-Shari'ah into national transportation policy and offering a model for sustainable infrastructure planning.*

Keywords*: environment, Federal Constitution, maqasid al-shari'ah, public transportation, railway, road, Sustainable Development Goals,*

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Introduction

Malaysia is divided into two distinct regions: Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia) and Borneo (East Malaysia), and as of 2025, Malaysia's population is approximately 34.2 million ("Department of Statistics Malaysia," 2025). To support the mobility of this population, the country's transportation infrastructure is primarily composed of two key systems: rail and road transport. However, current government policy clearly prefers road over rail transport. The 2025 Budget estimates RM 2.8 billion for federal road and bridge maintenance, which does not account for other road-related expenses such as street lighting, smart traffic lights, pothole repairs on federal roads, and the RON 95 petrol subsidy (Tan, 2024). In comparison, only 44% of the total RM 750 million was allocated to railway services, underscoring the disparity in financial commitment between the two modes of transport ("Budget 2025: MOT receives RM750 mln", 2024). Consequently, the rail transportation in Malaysia faced underdevelopment and limited usage. In 2025, the public transport use had reached only 20% of its potential capacity ("Malaysia's public transport usage," 2025). This low adoption rate underscores the need to rethink national transport policy using Maqasid al-Shari'ah theory. Maqasid al-Shari'ah also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) concerning public welfare. By integrating Maqasid al-Shari'ah with the UN SDGs within the context of transportation policy, Malaysia can promote various benefits by prioritising railway transportation over road infrastructure.

Literature Review

Railway operations in Malaysia

Railway transportation is crucial for the country's early economic growth (Abd Aziz et al., 2018). The British built the first railway line from Taiping to Port Weld (now called Kuala Sepetang) in 1885. (Hafizah Anuar & Akdeniz, 2017). Initially, it supports the colonial economy (Raja et al., 2015). As the railway system expanded, its purpose shifted to enhance connectivity across Peninsular Malaysia. In Borneo, the railway services date back to 1896 in Sabah and Sarawak in 1915 as part of a colonial strategy to facilitate resource extraction (Kaur, 1998). However, the railway activities in Sarawak terminated in 1931 due to economic infeasibility (Kaur, 1998). Today, railway affairs in Malaysia fall under the jurisdiction of Parliament and the Federal Government (Malaysian government), except for the Sabah Railway. (Federal Constitution, Item 10 (b) of the Federal List of the 9th Schedule). Three federal agencies play key roles in railway development. First is the Ministry of Transport (MOT). MOT oversees the national railway network. In 2023, the MOT created a dedicated body, Malaysia Rail Development Corporation (MRDC), to research sustainable railway policy ("Malaysia Rail Development Corporation," n.d.). The second is the Ministry of Finance (MOF), which is tasked with the financial management and oversight of statutory bodies under its purview. One of the MOF statutory bodies is the Minister of Finance (Incorporated), and one of its purposes is to oversee government-owned entities providing railway services (Ministerial Functions Act). The last one is the Ministry of Works (MOW), which has a more limited role in railway affairs. MOW focuses on infrastructure related to railway stations and supporting facilities.

Currently, seven entities are involved in the federal-level railway service. They are (a) Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB), (b) Prasarana Malaysia Berhad (Prasarana), (c) Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd (MRL), (d) Khazanah Nasional Berhad (Khazanah), (e) Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad (MAHB), (f) Federal Lands Commissioner, and (g) Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd (ERL). Generally, KTMB, Prasarana, MRL, Khazanah, and MAHB are wholly state-

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owned entities and overseen by the Ministry of Finance (Incorporated) ("Ministry of Finance Malaysia," n.d.). Thus, the Malaysian government has extended significant financial assurances to these entities. According to the 2025 Budget, the figure showed that the Malaysian government guaranteed a liability of RM 41,355 billion for Prasarana and RM 48,322 billion for MRL as of 2024 ("Ministry of Finance Malaysia," 2024). Nonetheless, ERL operates as a private limited company with substantial ownership stakes held by prominent Malaysian corporations and a statutory body, including YTL Corporation Berhad (45%), Lembaga Tabung Haji (36%), SIPP Rail Sdn Bhd (10%), and Trisilco Equity Sdn Bhd (9%) ("KLIA Ekspres," n.d.).

Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB)

Initially, the Malayan Railway Administration (MRA) was the sole entity responsible for railway operations in Peninsular Malaysia ("Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology [MIGHT]," 2014). Simultaneously, MRA workers are classified as public service members under the Railway Service Commission. However, the role of the MRA evolved significantly following the privatisation policies of the 1980s (Mody, 1997). The Malaysian government privatised railway operations to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and encourage competition. Consequently, the MRA was disbanded, leading to the establishment of two entities: KTMB and Railway Assets Corporation (RAC) ("Railway Assets Corporation," n.d.). The Railways (Successor Company) Act 1991 established KTMB as a private corporation. Meanwhile, RAC is a statutory body under the Railways Act 1991. Under this new framework, KTMB assumed responsibility for the operational aspects of the MRA railway system. At the same time, the RAC assumed control of the MRA's assets and liabilities. Thus, the division allowed KTMB to concentrate on service provision without the financial strain of infrastructure costs. Despite these efforts at restructuring, KTMB faced economic challenges, as evidenced by its audited annual reports from 2019 to 2022 ("Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad," n.d.-a). These reports showed continuous losses: RM 156,092,000 in 2019, RM 217,727,000 in 2020, RM 144,159,000 in 2021, and RM 6,455,000 in 2022. There are two reasons. The first *is* the high cost of operating its railway network. For example, in 2022, KTMB's revenue amounted to RM 525,812,000, but its services cost reached RM 553,918,000, resulting in a gross loss of RM 28,106,000. Second is the persistent decline in ridership ("Ministry of Transport Malaysia," 2022). The company's passenger numbers have declined significantly, from 3.746 million passengers in 2019 to 1.041 million in 2020. It further decreased to 304,000 in 2021, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic ("MCO, border closure crash demand," 2022). While there was a slight recovery to 2,678,000 passengers in 2022, these figures remain far below the pre-pandemic levels.

KTMB currently operates four types of railway services to cater to different population segments. These services are:

a) Electric Train Service (ETS) routes: These routes connect major cities and towns along the West Coast railway line, from Padang Besar (Perlis), Alor Setar (Kedah), Butterworth (Penang), Ipoh (Perak), KL Sentral (Kuala Lumpur), Seremban (Negeri Sembilan), Pulau Sebang (Malacca), and Segamat (Johor). The ETS service is a key component of KTMB's high-speed train network, designed to provide an efficient and comfortable travel experience ("Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad," n.d.-b).
b) Intercity routes: Three services are available. The first one is the East Coast railway line, which runs from Tumpat (Kelantan) to Jerantut (Pahang) and Gemas (Negeri Sembilan). The second is the West Coast railway line between Gemas and JB Sentral (Johor). The last is the Shuttle Tebrau from JB Sentral to Woodlands, Singapore, which will be discontinued

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in 2027 (Yasmine, 2025). All intercity routes utilise diesel-powered trains, providing an efficient means of travel for longer distances across Peninsular Malaysia and beyond ("Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad," n.d.-c).

c) Komuter routes: KTMB divides Komuter routes into four: Tanjung Malim (Perak) to Pelabuhan Klang (Selangor), Batu Caves (Selangor) to Pulau Sembang (Malacca), Padang Besar (Perlis) to Butterworth (Penang), and Butterworth to Ipoh (Perak). Komuter routes focus on the Klang Valley and the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia ("Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad," n.d.-d).

d) KTM Kargo routes: KTM Kargo is KTMB's dedicated freight service, facilitating the movement of goods across Malaysia and beyond. Operating through a joint venture with MMC Corp Bhd, KTMB holds a 51% share in KTM MMC Cargo Sdn Bhd (Tay, 2015). This service connects key logistics hubs, including major ports such as Port Klang and Tanjung Pelepas, and extends to Thailand ("Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad," n.d.-e). By providing a vital link between these essential economic zones, KTM Kargo supports Malaysia's export and import activities, offering an efficient and cost-effective alternative to road transport for long-haul freight. For example, in 2024, KTM Kargo handled 6 million tons of cargo, marking a 15% increase compared to 2023 (Fook, 2025).

Prasarana Malaysia Berhad (Prasarana)

At first, the development of light rail systems in the Klang Valley was managed by two entities: Sistem Transit Aliran Ringan Sdn Bhd (STAR) and Projek Usahasama Transit Ringan Automatik Sdn Bhd (PUTRA) (Lim et al., 2015). STAR was responsible for developing and operating the Ampang Line, which provided a crucial transportation link between Ampang and Sentul Timur. ("Prasarana Malaysia Berhad," n.d.-a). Meanwhile, PUTRA managed the Kelana Jaya Line, which ran from Gombak to Putra Heights, serving the southern parts of the Klang Valley ("Prasarana Malaysia Berhad," n.d.-a). Nonetheless, the Asian Financial Crisis 1997 caused STAR and PUTRA to be unable to meet their financial obligations ("World Bank," 2017). It led to Prasana bailing out their railway business in 2002 ("World Bank," 2017). A similar situation occurred with KL Monorail System Sdn Bhd, the former operator of the KL Monorail line ("Ministry of Transport Malaysia," n.d.). Due to its inability to settle a debt exceeding RM 880 million, Prasarana took over the operations of KL Monorail System Sdn Bhd in November 2007 (Barrock, 2015). At the same time, Prasarana began joint management with Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd (MRT Corp), another government-owned entity under the Minister of Finance (Incorporated), to provide mass rapid transit services in the Klang Valley. Under this joint management, the assets of mass rapid transit services are held by MRT Corp, while Prasarana will provide the services ("Malaysia Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd," n.d.). Currently, Prasarana manages most of the railway services in the Klang Valley through its subsidiary, Rapid Rail Sdn Bhd, which includes ("Prasarana Malaysia Berhad," n.d.-b):

a) Ampang Line: Running from Sentul Timur to Ampang, this line continues to serve as a vital commuter route, connecting important areas along the northeastern part of Kuala Lumpur.

b) Kelana Jaya Line: This line connects the north-south regions of Kuala Lumpur, running from Gombak to Putra Heights.

c) Sri Petaling Line: The Sri Petaling Line shares its route with the Ampang Line from Sentul Timur to Chan Sow Lin, located in the central area of Kuala Lumpur. While the Ampang Line terminates at Ampang Station, the Sri Petaling Line extends further, reaching the deep southern station at Putra Heights.

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d) Kuala Lumpur Monorail line: The Monorail Line operates between Titiwangsa and KL Sentral, providing a crucial connection through the heart of Kuala Lumpur.
e) MRT Kajang line: The route is 46 kilometres long, connecting from the north-west of Kwasa Damansara to the southeast of Kajang stations.
f) MRT Putrajaya line: The MRT Putrajaya Line shares the Kwasa Damansara station with the Kajang Line, but its endpoint is at Putrajaya Sentral.

Despite Prasarana's monopoly on railway services across the Klang Valley, the business remains unprofitable and heavily subsidised. For instance, the Auditor General's Report on Rapid Rail Sdn Bhd in 2022 revealed a total loss of RM 690.83 million in 2020 (Auditor General, 2022). Additionally, it received a government subsidy of RM 136.97 million between 2019 and May 2020 to cover its operating costs and ensure the continuity of services (Auditor General, 2022).

Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd (MRL)

MRL is the government-owned company responsible for the ownership and management of the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) ("Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd," n.d.-a). The ECRL is a key infrastructure project initiated by the Malaysian government to enhance connectivity between the East Coast and the West Coast states of Peninsular Malaysia (Zainuddin et al., 2022). The project aims to improve the economic integration of regions such as Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang, with the more developed West Coast states, including Selangor and the Federal Territories ("Malaysian Investment Development Authority," n.d.). The proposed ECRL will connect the key cities and towns in the East Coast to the West Coast, starting from Kota Bharu in Kelantan, and passing through major destinations such as Kuala Terengganu (Terengganu), KotaSAS (Pahang), and Integrated Transport Terminal Gombak (Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur), before reaching its terminal at Port Klang in Selangor ("Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd," n.d.-b). The railway line will span approximately 665 kilometres, providing a vital transport link that reduces travel time between the East and West Coasts ("Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd," n.d.-c). For instance, the current travel time by car between Kota Bharu and Kuala Lumpur is approximately 7 to 8 hours ("Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd," n.d.-c). However, with the introduction of the ECRL, the same journey will be completed in just 4 hours, making travel between the two regions faster, safer, and more efficient (Abdullah, 2022). The ECRL is scheduled to commence operations in January 2027 ("Malaysia Rail Link Sdn Bhd," n.d.-d). The Malaysian government has incurred a total cost of RM 74.96 billion to develop and build the ECRL (Chung, 2022). This significant financial commitment reflects the scale and importance of the project, which is poised to serve as a critical element in the country's transport infrastructure for years to come.

Federal Lands Commissioner, Khazanah Nasional Berhad (Khazanah) and Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad (MAHB) – Kuala Lumpur International Airport Aerotrain (KLIA Aerotrain)

KLIA Aerotrain is a rail transportation system that connects the main terminal building to the satellite building of the KLIA (Nizam, 2025). The ownership of KLIA and Aerotrain is intertwined with a complex framework of corporate structures. Federal Lands Commissioner owns KLIA (Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad, 2023). However, the operation of KLIA and the Aerotrain system has been leased to Malaysia Airports (Sepang) Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of MAHB, which acts as the airport operator (Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad, 2023). MAHB, originally a publicly listed company, was eventually taken over by Khazanah through the consortium it led, Gateway Development Alliance Sdn Bhd (Ikram, 2025). Khazanah, a

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government-owned investment fund, is wholly owned by the Minister of Finance (Incorporated), the entity responsible for overseeing public sector assets and investments ("Ministry of Finance," n.d.). Despite the relatively short 1.2 km distance covered by the KLIA Aerotrain, its operational and infrastructure costs are considerable (Wong, 2024). The cost of upgrading the Aerotrain system has been estimated at RM 456.1 million, as stipulated in the contract between MAHB and a consortium led by ALSTOM Transport Systems (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd (Yiau, 2024).

Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd (ERL)

ERL holds the exclusive concession for the KLIA Ekspres and KLIA Transit services, which are pivotal in connecting Kuala Lumpur city centre to KLIA ("Anthony Loke: ERL's KLIA service," 2024). These services, integral to Malaysia's transportation infrastructure, offer essential links for domestic and international travellers, ensuring swift and efficient access to one of Southeast Asia's busiest airports ("Port Authority of New York and New Jersey," 2024). KLIA Ekspres is a high-speed, non-stop rail service that operates directly between the Kuala Lumpur city centre and KLIA, providing passengers with a seamless, quick journey ("KLIA Express Ticket," 2025). In contrast, KLIA Transit serves a similar route with several intermediate stops, catering to a broader range of travellers who may depart or arrive from various stations ("KLIA Express Ticket," 2025). Both services ensure comprehensive connectivity between KLIA Terminal 1 and KLIA Terminal 2, further enhancing the convenience of passengers travelling through the airport. Maintenance and operational integrity for these services are managed by ERL Maintenance Support Sdn Bhd (E-MAS), which ERL owns ("ERL Maintenance Support Sdn Bhd," 2021). E-MAS is responsible for the upkeep and smooth functioning of the rail systems, ensuring the safety, reliability, and efficiency of both the KLIA Ekspres and KLIA Transit services.

The Law Governing Railway Transport

In Malaysia, two main pieces of legislation govern railway transport. The first is the Land Public Transport Act 2010, which applies to Peninsular Malaysia. Another legislation is the Railways Act 1991 for Sabah, Sarawak, and Labuan. Generally, Sections 83 (1) and 83 (7) of the Land Public Transport Act 2010 stipulate that any railway construction project must obtain approval from the Minister of Transport. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in the person being liable for an offence, punishable by a fine not exceeding five hundred thousand ringgit, imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, or both. Thus, Section 83 (2) provides that a person intending to build a railway must submit a written application and a railway scheme to the Director General of Land Public Transport. The details of the railway scheme are as follows: (a) the type and system of the proposed railway, (b) the proposed fare collection system, (c) the proposed fare collection system, (d) the proposed location of terminals, associated buildings, workshops, depots, and yards, (e) the safety aspects of the proposed railway system, (f) the proposed structure for rates, (g) the proposed integration with other existing or proposed railways, (h) the scheduled completion and proposed date of opening of the railway, (i) the proposed licensed operator of the railway is to be constructed, (j) the explanation of any additional activities, services, or operations that are closely related to or support the primary railway services, (k) proposed universal accessibility in all relevant parts of the railway aims to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities, (m) map showing the proposed railway routes and (n) information that is relevant to the railway scheme. At this juncture, Section 83 (2) of the Land Public Transport Act 2010 closely mirrors Section 7 of the Railways Act 1991, with the primary distinction being that, under the Railways Act 1991, the application and railway scheme must be submitted directly to the Minister of Transport.

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Road networks in Malaysia

Similar to the development of Malaysia's railway system, the colonial powers played a crucial role in establishing the country's road network to advance their economic interests. In Peninsular Malaysia, roads were primarily developed to transport tin and rubber, key commodities in global trade during the colonial era (Ahmad & Azmi, 2007). In Sabah, the road network was constructed by the North Borneo Chartered Company, the colonial authority in the region, to facilitate the extraction and transportation of natural resources (Kaur, 1994). In contrast, Sarawak lacked a comprehensive road infrastructure plan under the Brooke administration before joining Malaysia, limiting connectivity and hindering regional development (Drabble, 2000; "Public Works Department," 2017). Today, the legal framework governing road development in Malaysia is defined within the Federal Constitution. Both federal and state levels have the authority to enact and enforce laws related to road development. However, the Parliament is responsible for allocating funds to maintain state roads through the State Road Grant. This mechanism ensures that the Malaysian government supports a unified national transport infrastructure. Like the railway affair, the regulation and administration of the national road network involve several key ministries, each tasked with distinct responsibilities to ensure the seamless operation and development of the country's infrastructure. The MOT, MOF, and MOW play pivotal roles in managing the road network, with the MOW taking the lead in road construction. The most essential department in the MOW is the Public Works Department (PWD) (Ridzuan & Maiddin, 2024; "Government of Malaysia," n.d.). The PWD's jurisdiction spans all states in Malaysia, except for Sabah and Sarawak, which are managed by their respective state-level agencies ("Public Works Department," 2017). In Malaysia's road administration domain, the PWD classifies the national road network into two primary categories: federal and state roads ("Public Works Department," 2017). The federal road is defined as one that is gazetted under either Section 3 of the Federal Roads Act 1959 or Section 67 of the Road Transport Act 1987 ("Public Works Department," 2024; Ministry of Works, 2025). As of 2023, Malaysia's federal road network spans 20,421.01 kilometres, with 2,080.59 kilometres designated as toll highways ("Public Works Department," 2024).

Meanwhile, the expansion of toll highways within the federal road network can be traced back to the government's privatisation policy of 1983 ("Japan International Cooperation Agency," 1991). Initially, the construction of federal roads was solely the responsibility of the Malaysian government, which allowed the government to collect the tolls under the Tolls (Roads and Bridges) Act 1965. To alleviate this burden, the government had envisioned a statutory body to construct and manage toll highways (Highway Authority Malaysia, n.d.). Thus, the Highway Authority Malaysia was established under the Highway Authority Malaysia (Incorporation) Act 1980. However, the government soon re-evaluated its strategy and opted for a more market-driven approach ("Parliament Malaysia," 2024). This policy shift culminated in enacting the Federal Roads (Private Management) Act 1984. This legislation allowed private companies to collect toll fees in exchange for maintaining the road infrastructure (Bursa Malaysia Berhad, n.d.). One notable example is the case of Projek Lebuhraya Usahasama Bhd v Sin-Kung Logistics (KL) Sdn Bhd. Projek Lebuhraya Usahasama Bhd, the concession owner of the North-South Expressway, filed a lawsuit against Sin-Kung Logistics (KL) Sdn Bhd for the non-payment of toll fees. The toll fees were allegedly incurred by 19 lorries registered under the defendant's name. The court ruled in favour of the concession owner and awarded the sum of RM 518,369.27 and costs of RM 100,000.

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On the other hand, the state road means any public road other than a federal road, and any other road other than a federal road to which the public has access (Federal Constitution, Section 5 of Part II of the Tenth Schedule). As of 2023, Malaysia's state road network extends 264,906.725 kilometres ("Public Works Department," 2024). **Table 1** shows a continuous contribution by the Malaysian government from 1989 to 2020 ("Public Works Department," 2020; "Public Works Department," 2021):

Table 1: The Sum of State Road Grants from 1989 to 2020

Year	State Road Grant (RM / million)
1989	260.3
1994	479.3
1999	733.4
2004	942.9
2009	2,500.6
2011	2,591.3
2012	2,886.4
2013	3,570.4
2014	3,820.4
2015	3,969.4
2016	4,202.3
2017	4,328.3
2018	4,458.2
2019	4,577.8
2020	4,693.9

Source: (Public Works Department's Buku Statistik Jalan Edisi 2020 – 2021)

Meanwhile, MOT holds authority regarding road safety under the Road Transport Act 1987. This Act empowers the ministry to enforce safety standards of the country's road network. One of the notable provisions under the Act is Section 26, which mandates that no person shall operate a motor vehicle on the road unless they hold a valid driving license. Individuals who drive without a valid license may face a fine of no less than RM 300 and no more than RM 2,000, imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or both. However, it is crucial to note that driving without a license does not necessarily equate to negligent conduct under civil law. A pertinent example of this distinction is illustrated in the case of Ahmad Zulfendi bin Anuar v Mohd Shahril bin Abdul Rahman. In this case, the plaintiff, a motorcycle rider, filed a lawsuit against the defendant, a motorcar driver, for injuries sustained in a road accident. The defendant argued that the motorcycle rider's failure to possess a valid license should increase the motorcyclist's liability in the incident. However, the appellate court rejected this argument, emphasising that to establish liability, there must be a clear connection between the rider's failure to comply with the Road Transport Act 1987 and the injuries suffered by the plaintiff. Furthermore, the MOT is empowered to levy taxes related to road use under Section 66 (1) (o) of the Road Transport Act 1987. One of the most commonly imposed taxes is the motor vehicle license (widely known as road tax), as stipulated in Section 15 (1) of the Act. According to Section 23 (1), individuals found operating a motor vehicle without a valid motor vehicle license in force may be subject to a fine not exceeding RM 2,000.

MOF plays a crucial role in developing the country's road infrastructure by maintaining substantial investments in road projects and vehicle manufacturing. A notable example of the MOF's involvement in road development is PLUS Malaysia Berhad, a key player in the nation's

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toll highway network. PLUS Malaysia Berhad operates several major highways, including the North-South Expressway, New Klang Valley Expressway, Seremban-Port Dickson Highway, Malaysia-Singapore Second Crossing, Penang Bridge, North-South Expressway Central Link, Butterworth-Kulim Expressway, and Lebuhraya Pantai Timur Phase 2 ("UEM Group Berhad," 2024a). The ownership structure of PLUS Malaysia Berhad is shared between UEM Group Berhad (51%) and the Employees Provident Fund Board (EPF) (49%) ("PLUS Malaysia Berhad," n.d.). UEM Group Berhad is a subsidiary of Khazanah Nasional Berhad, which is owned by the Minister of Finance (Incorporated), underscoring the government's direct involvement in the management and development of Malaysia's toll highways ("UEM Group Berhad," 2024b). The EPF, a statutory body established under the Employees Provident Fund Act 1991, also answers to the MOF (Ministerial Functions Act 1969), reinforcing the financial oversight that the ministry has over these crucial national assets.

In addition to its involvement in toll highways, the MOF maintains a significant presence in the national vehicle manufacturing industry. A prominent example is Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd (Perodua), one of the best-selling car brands in Malaysia, particularly in 2024 (Lye, 2025). Perodua's shares are indirectly controlled by the government, with 38% of the shares held by UMW Corporation Sdn Bhd and 10% by AmanahRaya Trustees Berhad (Perodua, n.d.). UMW Corporation Sdn Bhd is a subsidiary of UMW Holdings Berhad, which in turn is a subsidiary of Sime Darby Berhad, a publicly listed company in Malaysia (Sime Darby Berhad, 2024). Notably, Sime Darby Berhad is a corporation with significant government-related shareholding, including more than 35.19% of its shares held in trust by AmanahRaya Trustees Berhad, a trust company governed under the Trust Companies Act 1949 (Sime Darby Berhad, 2024). AmanahRaya Trustees Berhad is a subsidiary company of Amanah Raya Berhad, a private company established under the Public Trust Corporation Act 1995 and controlled by the Ministry of Finance (AmanahRaya Trustees Berhad, n.d.; Ministerial Functions Act 1969).

Furthermore, the MOF's influence extends significantly into the vehicle financing sector, particularly through the hire purchase market, where it plays a pivotal role in supporting consumer access to vehicle ownership. One of the leading financial institutions involved in this sector is Malayan Banking Berhad (Maybank), which in 2024 achieved a market capitalisation of RM123.57 billion, securing its position as one of the largest companies in Malaysia ("Maybank," 2024). Maybank's prominence is underscored by its inclusion in the Fortune Southeast Asia 500 list, further affirming its critical role in the country's financial landscape ("Maybank teraju syarikat Malaysia," 2024). Maybank is actively involved in offering various financial products for vehicle purchases. For instance, Maybank collaborates with Perodua to offer Perodua Flexiplan, a hire purchase product specifically designed to ease the process of vehicle ownership for consumers (Chapree, 2025). Further extending its reach, Maybank has also formed a strategic partnership with BYD Malaysia, appointing Maybank as the preferred financier for the Denza vehicle line in Malaysia ("Special Maybank financing," 2025). From an ownership perspective, AmanahRaya Trustees Berhad holds over 30% of Maybank's shares in trust ("Maybank," 2024). This connection reinforces the MOF's significant influence over the financial products offered by Maybank, including those targeted at vehicle financing. This substantial stake links the government directly to Maybank, amplifying the MOF's influence over the financial products that Maybank offers, including those related to vehicle financing. By holding a significant portion of Maybank's shares, the MOF ensures that the financial institution's operations, particularly in vehicle financing, align with national economic and policy objectives, promoting consumer access to vehicles and the growth of the automotive sector.

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Like the MOT, the MOF has a significant interest in car ownership taxation through various statutory provisions. These include excise duties under the Excise Act 1976, import duties as outlined in the Customs Act 1967, and sales tax in accordance with the Sales Tax Act 2018. These taxes are critical components of Malaysia's fiscal policy, generating substantial revenue for the government while regulating the domestic automotive market.

Intermodal Connectivity between Railway and Road Infrastructure

Intermodal connectivity between rail and road systems in Malaysia highlights the complementary roles and occasional competition between these two transportation modes. While rail and road infrastructures are integral to Malaysia's transport system, each mode serves different needs. These systems sometimes complement each other, while they compete for passengers and freight in other cases.

Complementary Roles of Rail and Road Systems

i. Efficiency in urban and long-distance travel

Rail transport complements road transport by offering efficient and fast urban commuting and long-distance travel alternatives. A 2024 TomTom Traffic Index report ranked George Town, Penang, as having the highest travel time, with over 26 minutes and 36 seconds per 10 km, compared to Kuala Lumpur, which averages approximately 17 minutes and 26 seconds per 10 km (“TomTom,” 2024). This disparity is attributed mainly to Kuala Lumpur's extensive and integrated railway network, primarily managed by Prasarana, including services like the KL Monorail (“Prasarana Malaysia Berhad,” n.d.-b). The availability of rail services in Kuala Lumpur reduces road congestion, making it a more time-efficient option for commuters in the city.

ii. Last-Mile Connectivity

Road systems are vital in providing last-mile connectivity, bridging the gap between railway stations and areas not directly accessible by rail. For instance, residents of Selayang rely on the road network to reach the nearest KTMB Komuter station at Batu Caves, ensuring seamless access to the wider rail network. Similarly, KL Sentral, a key hub that connects multiple rail lines, is located approximately 600 meters from the nearest KL Monorail station. This proximity, supported by well-integrated road networks, enhances the convenience and accessibility of public transportation, making it easier for commuters to switch between different modes of transport.

iii. Park-and-Ride Facilities

Malaysia has developed park-and-ride facilities at key railway stations such as KL Sentral, Terminal Bersepadu Selatan, Putrajaya Sentral, and Integrated Transport Terminal Gombak to improve intermodal connectivity. These facilities allow commuters to park vehicles and continue their journey via rail, ensuring a seamless transition from road to rail. This approach is particularly beneficial for individuals living in suburban areas and commuting to city centres. By reducing the reliance on private cars and easing traffic congestion, these facilities encourage greater use of public transport, contributing to a more sustainable and integrated transport system.

iv. Cost Efficiency and Sustainability

Rail transport is highly cost-effective and environmentally sustainable for long-haul freight, particularly for bulk goods. An example is KTM Kargo’s freight services for companies such

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as YTL Cement Berhad, a subsidiary of the publicly listed YTL Corporation Berhad ("Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad," n.d.-e); "YTL Corporation Berhad," 2024). YTL Cement operates a cement plant in Kanthan, Chemor, Perak, directly connected to the KTM network. By utilising rail to transport goods, YTL Cement significantly reduces the carbon footprint associated with road transport. However, the final delivery to YTL Cement consumers typically relies on road transport for last-mile delivery.

v. Intermodal Freight Terminals

Two major ports in Malaysia are renowned for their impressive performance in global rankings. For instance, Port Klang was ranked as the world's tenth busiest container port in 2025 by Lloyd's List ("Port Klang ranks 10th," 2025). Similarly, Tanjung Pelepas Port was ranked fifth among the top container ports globally in 2023 by the World Bank and S&P Global Market Intelligence (World Bank, 2024). One of the key factors contributing to such high rankings is the strategic role both ports play as intermodal freight terminals, particularly in facilitating Chinese investment (Khin et al., 2019). These ports are vital transfer points where freight is moved seamlessly between rail and road transport. The connectivity of these ports to KTM Kargo enhances their logistical capabilities, making them pivotal nodes in the global supply chain ("Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad," n.d.-e). A significant milestone in this regard was the launch of the China-Laos-Thailand-Malaysia express freight train, which marked a new chapter in rail freight connectivity between China and Malaysia. In May 2024, the first train departed from Chengdu in southwest China, heading directly to Port Klang ("1st China-Laos," 2024). This direct rail link further solidifies the strategic importance of Port Klang and Tanjung Pelepas Port, enhancing their status as key intermodal hubs for international trade and underscoring the significant role of KTM Kargo in connecting Malaysia to the broader Southeast Asian and global markets.

Competitive Dynamics Between Rail and Road Systems

i. Competition in Short and Medium-Distance Travel

Rail and road transport often compete for the same passenger market, especially in areas with overlapping routes. For example, commuter trains like the KTMB and long-distance buses frequently serve the same routes, with passengers choosing between them based on convenience, cost, and travel time. While trains can be faster and more reliable in avoiding road congestion, buses and taxis offer greater flexibility regarding direct access to destinations not served by rail lines.

ii. Price Sensitivity and Service Availability

Price sensitivity is a significant factor in the competition between rail and road transport, especially for long-distance travel. Buses are often more affordable than trains, leading passengers to choose buses when cost is a key consideration. This statement is evident from the price difference between KTM ETS and bus tickets from Butterworth, Penang, to Kuala Lumpur. **Picture 1** represented the KTM ETS ticket prices as of 15 September 2025, costing between RM 68.00 and RM 103.00 ("Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad," n.d.f). **Picture 2** is a bus ticket price for the exact route, which sets between RM 37.00 and RM 65.00 (BusOnlineTicket, n.d.). Furthermore, buses typically offer frequent departures, making them a more flexible option for many travellers.

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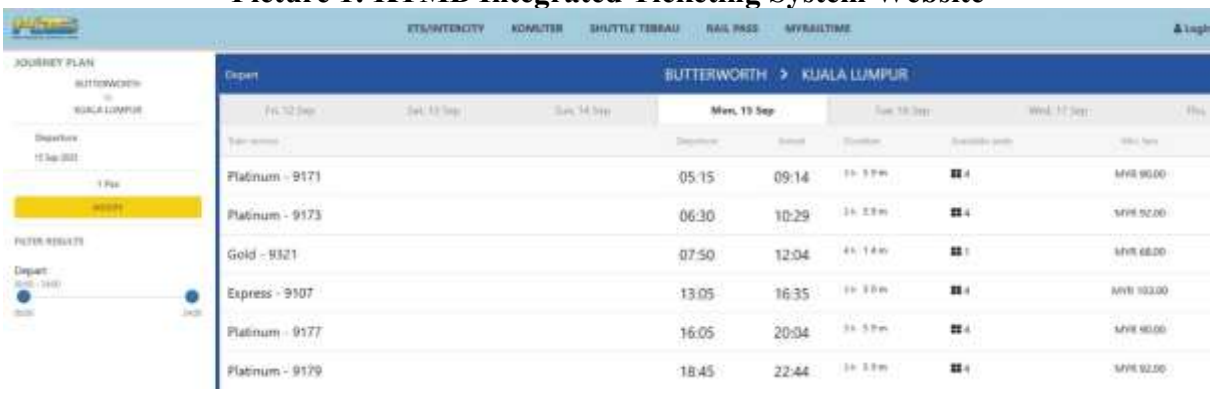
Picture 1: KTMB Integrated Ticketing System Website



Source: (https://online.ktmb.com.my/Trip)

Picture 2: Bus Ticket at the Busonlineticket Website

Source: (https://www.busonlineticket.com/)

Nonetheless, rail offers distinct advantages such as a more predictable schedule and a reduced risk of delays caused by road traffic congestion (Ibrahim et al., 2020). It is less likely to be involved in an accident. These factors make rail travel an attractive alternative for passengers seeking reliability and timely arrivals.

iii. Competing for Freight Hauling

Road transport is generally more flexible than rail for short-distance deliveries and can reach areas not connected by rail. Trucks can navigate smaller, less-developed roads, allowing them to compete for freight that would otherwise rely on rail. However, rail is more competitive for long-haul, high-volume goods due to its cost-effectiveness and lower environmental impact.

iv. Congestion and Road Maintenance

In urban areas, the competition between road and rail transport is becoming more pronounced, especially with the growing highway congestion due to the high volume of freight trucks. Rail can help alleviate some of this congestion by shifting long-haul freight onto trains, reducing the strain on road infrastructure. However, as Malaysia's road infrastructure continues to expand, the competition between road and rail transport will intensify, particularly in areas where both modes serve similar transport corridors. A notable example is Taman Seri Gombak, Selangor, which lacks a direct railway connection. The nearest rail options are Batu Caves Station, approximately 5 km away, and the Integrated Transport Terminal in Gombak, about 7 km away. The absence of a rail link in this area is likely since Taman Seri Gombak has convenient access

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to several major highways, such as the Duta-Ulu Kelang Expressway (DUKE) and Kuala Lumpur Middle Ring Road 2 (MRR2). These well-established road connections provide commuters with direct, efficient access to other parts of the Klang Valley, reducing the immediate need for a railway connection. As the competition between road and rail continues to evolve, areas like Taman Seri Gombak, where road infrastructure is already well-developed, may prioritise road transport over rail despite the long-term benefits rail could provide.

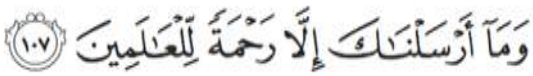
Methodology

This research integrates the doctrinal research method with the theory of Maqasid al-Shari'ah to argue the reason for prioritising railway transportation over road transportation. The topic will be divided further into two parts: (1) what are Maqasid al-Shari'ah?, and (2) the compatibility between Maqasid al-Shari'ah and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

What are Maqasid al-Shari'ah?

Maqasid al-Shari'ah is a fundamental concept in Islamic jurisprudence, emphasising that every human action and decision must align with specific Islamic values aimed at protecting the welfare of individuals and society (Abu Bakar & Abdul Rahim, 2021). It can be defined as the purposes, meanings, and wisdoms set by Shari'ah Islamiyyah in the prescribed rulings and the underlying intentions that aim to safeguard human well-being." (Tarmizi, 2019). The ultimate goal of Maqasid al-Shari'ah is to promote goodness and prevent harm per Islamic teachings (Al-Zarqa, 2014).

As a guiding framework, Maqasid al-Shari'ah provides a standard for addressing contemporary issues, helping to ensure that solutions are rooted in positive Islamic values (Wanto et al., 2021). It allows the expansion of Islamic law across various contexts, including the concept of fundamental liberties, while ensuring that it remains within the bounds of what is sanctioned by Islamic principles (Ibrahim et. al., 2019). However, it is essential to note that Maqasid al-Shari'ah is not without its limitations. The standard it sets cannot contradict well-established Islamic sources that are universally agreed upon, such as the Al-Quran, Al-Sunnah (the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad), Al-Ijma' (consensus among scholars), and Al-Qiyas (analogy) (Usmani, 2014). These primary sources are the foundation for assessing the validity of any action or ruling based on Maqasid al-Shari'ah. The theoretical underpinnings of Maqasid al-Shari'ah can be traced back to key texts in Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah. Numerous verses in the Quran justify the framework of Maqasid al-Shari'ah, with one of the most prominent being from Surah Al-Anbiya' (21:107), which states:



"We have sent you [O Prophet] only as a mercy for the whole world."

This verse encapsulates the core principle of Maqasid al-Shari'ah, emphasising the mercy and beneficence that Islam aims to bring to all of humanity (Afridi, 2016). The term "Rahmatan" (mercy) in this verse encompasses qualities such as compassion, kindness, goodwill, and beneficence, all of which align to safeguard human interests and prevent harm in this world and the Hereafter (Afridi, 2016).

Another justification of maqasid syariah can be attributed to the Hadith narrated by Ibnu Umar, which discusses an incident during the Prophet's time involving the Qurayzah tribe (Sahih al-

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Bukhari 946 & 4119). In this story, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) sent a group of companions to the Qurayzah tribe with instructions to pray the Asr prayer there. However, due to the journey's timing, the companions faced the dilemma of whether to pray on time or delay until they reached the tribe, after the prayer's time had expired. Upon reporting this situation to the Prophet, he approved both approaches, recognising that the purpose of the ruling was flexible to accommodate the circumstances. Based on this Hadith, it was argued that the Maqasid al-Shari'ah theory is inherently dynamic and adaptable, allowing the expansion of Islamic legal principles to encompass a variety of contexts and situations (Auda, 2010). This flexibility enables Islamic law to remain relevant and applicable in the face of evolving challenges, while still adhering to the Quran's and Sunnah's theological foundations (Auda, 2010). Jurists have established several criteria to determine what constitutes Maqasid al-Shari'ah. One of the most widely accepted frameworks is the five fundamental objectives outlined by Iman al-Shatibi and Imam Al-Ghazali, which are (Laldin, 2025):

a) Protection of religion (Din): Ensuring faith's free practice and preservation.
b) Protection of life (Nafs): Safeguarding human life and health.
c) Protection of intellect (Aql): Preserving mental faculties and preventing anything that impairs one's ability to think or reason.
d) Protection of progeny (Nasl): Ensuring the safety and well-being of future generations, particularly through safeguarding family and marriage structures.
e) Protection of property (Mal): Securing individuals' material possessions and wealth from harm or unlawful appropriation.

One of the contemporary sub-criteria in the Maqasid al-Shari'ah framework is Hifz al-Bi'ah, which refers to the protection of the environment (Khuluq & Asmuni, 2025). This criterion is rooted in the understanding that the environment is an integral part of human welfare, and its preservation is essential for safeguarding the broader objectives of Maqasid al-Shari'ah as outlined by Imam Al-Ghazali and Imam al-Shatibi (Khuluq & Asmuni, 2025). The protection of the environment is crucial because environmental destruction can lead to harm not only to the environment itself but also to the religion (Iman), life (Nafs), intellect (Aql), progeny (Nasl), and property (Mal) of individuals (Johar et al., 2021). Therefore, the environment is considered a key component in the well-being and welfare of human beings from an Islamic perspective. The source for this criterion is found in various Islamic teachings, notably in Surah Ar-Rum (30:41), which states:

ظَهَرَ ٱلْفَسَادُ فِى ٱلْبَرِّ وَٱلْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِى ٱلنَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُم بَعْضَ ٱلَّذِى عَمِلُوا۟ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

"Corruption has spread on land and sea as a result of what people's hands have done, so that Allah may cause them to taste [the consequences of] some of their deeds, and perhaps they might return [to the Right Path]."

This verse emphasises that environmental degradation is the direct result of human actions, and it serves as a reminder that such damage can have far-reaching consequences, not only for the environment but also for human society and future generations (Tahir & Hamid, 2024). The concept of Hifz al-Bi'ah stresses the responsibility of humans to avoid causing harm to the environment, as its destruction leads to damage in other critical areas of life, such as health, property, and community welfare.

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The Compatibility Between Maqasid al-Shari'ah and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), also known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015 ("United Nations General Assembly," 2015). These goals represent a universal call for addressing global challenges, including economic, social, and environmental sustainability. **Table 2** is the proof of the similarity.

Table 2: The Compatibility between Maqasid al-Shari'ah and UN SDGs

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals	Sources of Islam	Maqasid al-Shari'ah criteria
SDG 1: No poverty	Sunan Abi Dawud 1544	Protection of life
SDG 2: Zero hunger	Sahih Muslim 56	Protection of life
SDG 3: Good health and well-being	Sahih al-Bukhari 6412	Protection of life
SDG 4: Quality education	Surah al-Mujadalah: 58:11	Protection of intellect
SDG 5: Gender equality	Surah al-Hujurat: 49:13	Protection of progeny
SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation	Sahih al-Bukhari 7446	Protection of property
SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy	Surah An-Naba' 78:13	Protection of the environment
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth	Sunan Ibn Majah 2443	Protection of life
SDG 9: Industry, innovation, technology, and infrastructure	Surah al-Qasas: 28:77	Protection of intellect
SDG 10: Reduced inequality	Surah Al-Ahzab: 33:44	Protection of life
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities	Surah al-'Araaf: 7:74	Protection of property
SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production	Surah al-Isra': 17:27	Protection of property
SDG 13: Climate action	Surah al-Qasas: 28:77	Protection of the environment
SDG 14: Life below water	Surah al-Nahl: 16:14	Protection of the environment
SDG 15: Life on land	Surah al-Sajdah: 32:27	Protection of the environment
SDG 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions	Surah al-Maidah: 5:8	Protection of life
SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals	Surah Al-Ma'idah: 5:2	Protection of life

Source: (United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 on 25 September 2015)

Among these, SDG 11 specifically addresses the need for sustainable cities and communities, with particular emphasis on improving access to public transportation, enhancing road safety, and ensuring that transport systems are inclusive and accessible for all, especially vulnerable populations such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and older people. SDG 11.2 underscores the importance of providing access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable

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transport systems by 2030. The goal focuses on expanding public transport infrastructure, which is crucial for reducing congestion and pollution and fostering equitable access to mobility. By addressing transportation barriers, this SDG is critical in promoting social inclusion and enhancing overall well-being, especially for marginalised communities.

Findings

The Role of Maqasid al-Shari'ah in the Malaysian Legal System

Implementing Maqasid al-Shari'ah into the Malaysian legal system is consistent with the country's legal framework since the Federal Constitution of Malaysia does not contain any provisions that explicitly disallow the incorporation of Islamic theory into the national legal system (Izmi & Hilmi, 2025). In fact, the customary laws referenced in Article 160 (2) of the Federal Constitution are deeply intertwined with Malay customs, which are intrinsically linked to Islam, the religion of the majority in Malaysia (Ibrahim, 1968). Over the years, Maqasid al-Shari'ah has been effectively implemented in various facets of Malaysian law. The Malaysian government has introduced several initiatives incorporating Islamic principles to promote human welfare and justice and protect key values such as religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property. Examples include MS 1900 Shariah-based Quality Management System and Maqasid al-Shari'ah Guidance for the Islamic Capital Market, which embodied the Maqasid al-Shari'ah principles.

The Synthesis of Maqasid al-Shari'ah and UN SDGs with Railway Transportation in Malaysia

Thus, it is argued that the Malaysian government should prioritise the development of railway transportation over road infrastructure. Several reasons support this assertion, based on the Maqasid al-Shari'ah framework, which is also aligned with UN SDGs:

a) Protection of religion

Railway transportation promotes a more conducive environment for Muslim practices. For instance, traffic jams on roads may prevent Muslims from performing their prayers on time (Ahmad Sukri & Muhd Adnan, 2020). However, train services can offer a more predictable and timely option for commuting, enabling Muslims to practice their faith with greater ease.

b) Protection of life

Road accidents are a significant issue in Malaysia, with the country having one of the highest traffic accident rates in ASEAN ("One person dies every 2 hours," 2025). In 2024, Malaysia recorded an average of 1,729 traffic accidents per day, with 14 daily fatalities ("One person dies every 2 hours," 2025). Traffic accidents are one of Malaysia's leading causes of death (Musa et al., 2020), with over 38.7 million registered vehicles in 2024, amounting to 727 vehicles for every 1,000 people ("38.7 juta kenderaan berdaftar," 2025). From 2020 to July 2025, 29,081,963 vehicles were registered in Malaysia, increasing the risk of road accidents ("Government of Malaysia", 2025). While providing convenience and mobility, the ownership of vehicles is often associated with the risk of unforeseeable accidents. For example, the case of Sam Ke Ting v PP highlights the risk of car ownership and road travel, where the accused collided with a group of cyclists, causing fatalities. The accused was acquitted because of the duplicity of the charge, and there is evidence that the accused was driving within the speed limit. In contrast, railway transportation presents a much safer alternative. Accidents involving railway systems are rare compared to road transportation. Between 2016 and 2021, fewer than 10 cases involving railway accidents made headlines, illustrating the relative safety of rail travel

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in Malaysia ("Latest LRT accident," 2021; Zahidi, 2021). The controlled environment of railway systems, along with structured schedules and routes, significantly reduces the likelihood of accidents compared to the unpredictability of road traffic.

c) Protection of intellect

Traffic congestion is a significant contributor to mental health issues, and numerous studies have shown that prolonged exposure to these factors can have profound physiological and psychological consequences. Studies have shown that exposure to displeasure can lead to sleep disturbances (Hahad et al., 2025), stress, bodily pain, and headaches (Rahman & Das, 2022), contributing to long-term conditions such as depression, anxiety (Nadrian et al., 2019), and even premature death (Borchers-Arriagada et al., 2025). Furthermore, road congestion exacerbates these issues by extending commute times, leading to frustration, fatigue, and heightened stress levels (Lajunen et al., 1999). The unpredictability and constant exposure to stressful driving conditions not only harm mental health but can also lead to chronic conditions over time, affecting overall quality of life. In contrast, railway transport offers a significantly quieter and more predictable commuting environment, which can mitigate the adverse effects of traffic-related stress. Studies have indicated that commuting by train is less stressful and has less of a negative impact on mood compared to commuting by car (Wener & Evans, 2011). The regulated and quieter nature of train travel allows passengers to relax, read, or work, which can lead to improved mental well-being. Additionally, the predictability of train schedules reduces the anxiety associated with traffic delays and congestion.

d) Protection of progeny

Road transportation, particularly in the ride-hailing industry, has been linked to numerous incidents of sexual assault and misconduct, raising serious concerns about the safety of passengers, especially women. In the United States, reports indicate that Uber received complaints of sexual misconduct every eight minutes between 2017 and 2022, underscoring the frequency and severity of such incidents in the ride-hailing sector (Rissman, 2025). Similarly, in Malaysia, incidents of sexual harassment have been reported, including a case where a Grab passenger experienced unwanted advances during a short ride ("Sexual harassment in the ride-hailing industry," 2021). These troubling occurrences highlight the vulnerability of passengers in an environment where the interactions between driver and passenger are often unregulated and unpredictable. In contrast, railway transportation offers a more regulated and controlled environment, which can significantly reduce the risk of such incidents. The structured nature of train services, with dedicated stations, trained personnel, and fixed routes, ensures oversight not typically present in private car travel. Introducing specific safety measures, such as women-only passenger trains, has proven to be an effective solution to address concerns about sexual harassment. In Malaysia, implementing women-only carriages has led to a noticeable decline in harassment incidents. According to a report, introducing these designated carriages contributed to a decrease from an average of 3.2 cases to two cases per month in sexual harassment complaints in 2024 (Yusoff & Ismi, 2024).

e) Protection of property

Car ownership is often associated with significant financial burdens, including loan, maintenance, insurance, and fuel costs (Robinson et al., 2025). This financial strain affects overall life satisfaction and contributes to economic pressure (Saadaoui et al., 2025). Railway transportation, as a public service, provides a more affordable and sustainable alternative, reducing the financial burden on individuals and promoting greater property security by reducing the need for personal vehicle ownership.

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Conclusion

Implementing Maqasid al-Shari'ah into Malaysia's legal frameworks is beneficial for the long-term development and well-being of the nation. The integration of this Islamic legal theory, which emphasises the protection of key values such as religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property, aligns well with the country's socio-economic goals, especially in the context of public transportation. The Malaysian government would strategically promote sustainability, safety, and efficiency by prioritising railway transportation over road infrastructure. The case for prioritising railway transportation is bolstered by its clear advantages in reducing road accidents, alleviating mental health issues caused by traffic congestion, preventing sexual harassment, and minimising the financial burden of car ownership. Thus, this study calls for a policy reform that shifts the focus towards strengthening the railway infrastructure, ensuring that it becomes a central component of Malaysia's transport system. This reform would contribute to the country's economic prosperity and promote a healthier, safer, and more inclusive society, aligning with Maqasid al-Shari'ah and the global UN SDGs.

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