

ISRAEL-FLAGGED SHIPS BANNED FROM PORTS

Govt will also permanently ban Israel-based shipping company ZIM, says PM

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THE government has banned ships bearing the Israeli flag from docking in Malaysia.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the ban extended to ships en route to Israel.

"The restrictions are a response to Israel's sidelining of basic humanitarian principles and violation of international laws in its continued assault and atrocities against the people of Palestine.

"Malaysia is confident the decision will not affect the country's trade activities," he said yesterday.

Anwar, who is finance minister, said the government also blocked Israel-based shipping company ZIM Integrated Shipping Services Ltd from docking its ships in Malaysia, with immediate effect.

He said the Transport Ministry would impose a permanent ban on the company.

He said the ban revoked cabinet decisions that had granted ZIM permission to dock its vessels in Malaysia.

"The cabinet began allowing ships owned by this company to

dock in Malaysia in 2002

"In 2005, the cabinet at the time gave permission for the ships to dock in Malaysia.

"The current government has decided to revoke all previous cabinet decisions."

Transport Minister Anthony Loke, in a subsequent statement, confirmed that a ZIM vessel scheduled to dock in Port Klang on Monday would be barred.

He said the ministry had instructed the Port Klang Authority to help logistical companies, importers, exporters and shipping companies manage the cargo affected by the decision.

Since the beginning of Israel's attacks on Gaza, Malaysia has taken a strong stance against the Zionist regime's atrocities.

Recently, on the sidelines of the Asean-Japan summit in Tokyo, Japan, Anwar called out the "international hypocrisy" over the Gaza crisis and urged the world to do more to achieve a humanitarian ceasefire.

Experts believe the ban on Israel-linked vessels would have little to no impact on Malaysia's trade and economy.

They believe it would not affect Malaysia's ties with economic superpowers such as the United States (US), a strong ally of Israel.

Universiti Kuala Lumpur Business School economic analyst Professor Aimi Zulhazmi Abdul Rashid said the ban was a brave move and reflected the sentiment of the majority of people around the world on the issue.

"Although ZIM is among the top 20 largest shipping companies globally, its value has dropped

drastically. This year, its stock price fell from a 52-week high of US\$29.38 to US\$9.17 yesterday (Tuesday).

"It has lowered its expectations for 2023 and adjusted its EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) in the second quarter, implying a steep decline in free cash flow."

He said Malaysia should continue to uphold its sovereignty and maintain solidarity with the Palestinians.

"I do not think this move will cause a major problem for ZIM, as other ports in the region can accommodate the shipping company."

Putra Business School Associate Professor Dr Ahmed Razman Abdul Latiff said the decision would not affect Malaysia much as the country has no diplomatic or formal trade ties with Israel.

"This action is in line with the United Nations' principles, which is to not support Israel's violence in Gaza'. It does not contravene international laws.

"Even if there was a boycott, it will have no impact as the regime (Israel) is not a trade partner."

On whether this move would affect Malaysia's ties with Israel's allies, such as the US, Razman said he was certain the US would not act against Malaysia.

He said although the US is one of Malaysia's largest trading partners, the decision would not have a major impact on ties between the countries.

"I don't see this having any repercussion for us, as the focus now is on Israel, not other countries."