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US embargo on Cuba affects all sectors, all Cubans -- Ambassador

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The US embargo against Cuba, which was officially imposed in February 1962, has affected all sectors on the island nation as well as the country's over 11 million population for almost six decades.

More than 70 per cent of the population has been living under the embargo since they were born, said Cuban Ambassador to Malaysia Ibet Fernández Hernández.

The envoy said the embargo has, among others, affected Cuba's ability to produce its own medicine and limited its access to advanced medicine and suppliers.

"Cuba produces most of the drugs. But there are many still that we need to buy abroad, including the raw material to produce these drugs in Cuba.

"Because of the sanctions, it has been difficult for Cuba to fulfill that need. For example, children suffering from cancer, they sat at the hospital waiting for the cytostatics because we don't produce it in Cuba," she told Bernama International News Service recently.

The blockade also affects its education sector, including for special needs children.

According to 'Cuba's Report Against the Blockade' released in July this year, damages caused by the 57-year blockade amounts to US\$922.63 billion.

The report also stated that the prohibitions caused, among others, access to the Smart Braille

machines (a learning tool) being denied to those in need as they are manufactured and sold in the US.

The ambassador said the embargo has been painful for Cubans, especially new measures which cause oil shortages.

"Imagine, a country almost paralysed because there was almost nil fuel to turn on lights. It creates problems. We have money to buy fuel but the ships cannot come to our shores. How are we going to survive" she said.

Hernández said the United Nations, for the past 27 years, had adopted an annual resolution calling for an end to the embargo on Cuba.

The last vote in 2018 saw a recorded vote of 189 in favour to two against (Israel, United States), with no abstentions.

The same resolution will be presented for the 28th time at the UN on Nov 6-7 this year.

"We are thankful to Malaysia because they have been supporting Cuba against the blockade. Each and every one of these resolutions has been approved against the blockade, Malaysia has been supporting it," she said.

The US, in 2014 under then-President Barack Obama, modified the application of sanctions which allow for more exchanges.

In 2017, the Trump administration had reversed the decision and introduced new sanctions to Cuba.

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