

'US investors not avoiding Malaysia'

By Seema Viswanathan

PUTRAJAYA, Tues: American investors are not avoiding Malaysia, the president of the American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce, Nicholas Zeffreys, said today.

"The investment numbers are holding up quite well," he told reporters after a dialogue between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and a delegation from the chamber.

Zeffreys noted that the World Bank had projected a substantial downturn in growth worldwide, but stressed that this is not

restricted to Malaysia.

"It has to do with the global slowdown. At the beginning of this year, it was expected that the world Gross Domestic Product growth would be around 2.8%," he said.

"Now, it's projected to be less than 1%. With all the uncertainty and unpredictability related to the war on terrorism, we won't see an immediate turnaround."

However, despite the effects of the decrease, America will remain committed to Malaysia.

"The level of American investments over the last several decades here is so great that you can bet there is going to be continued re-

investment," he said.

US Ambassador to Malaysia Marie Huhtala told reporters that American businessmen are "comfortable with the situation here".

"There has been no problem with the running of American business here throughout this crisis. Operations have continued normally," Huhtala said.

Both Zeffreys and Huhtala said they are satisfied with the emphasis placed on security matters and Malaysia stand against terrorism.

Huhtala said the US Embassy had received protection from the police during the recent demonstration by PAS members and

supporters outside its premises.

She said that since such "expressions of opinion" are common in her country, the embassy considers it "a normal sort of event".

She also said the case of the letter tainted with anthrax, which was redirected to the US from Malaysia, is still under investigation.

"Both governments are looking at this very carefully. If anthrax is being deliberately sent through the mail, then this is a terrible act and something we're very concerned about.

"We condemn the sending of biological agents through the mail," Huhtala said.