

# 'US can again be a friend to the world'

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**WASHINGTON:** Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, when launching the Malaysia-America Friendship Caucus at Capitol Hill yesterday, said the United States can once again be the universal friend of the world by being more gentle towards recalcitrant nations and people.

"I would be lying if I say that the world still sees the United States of America as the friend that they knew," the prime minister told a closed-door luncheon at the launch of the caucus, also known as the Malaysia

Trade, Security and Economic Cooperation Caucus.

"Yet, there is every reason and every possibility for the United States and the Americans to be once again the universal friend of the world."

The text of his speech was distributed to the Malaysian media here by the prime minister's office.

The luncheon, held at the Speaker's Dining Room of the Capitol, was attended by members of the US Congress.

The caucus, made up of US Congressmen, is aimed at

Mahathir, who is on a three-day visit to the US, said people tend to respond more positively to the friendly approach than to confrontation.

"Pushed into a corner, even the weakest will fight. Victory over them will really not mean much," he said.

Mahathir, who is well-known for speaking his mind, said Malaysians understood Americans' anxiety to see that the freedom that they enjoyed should be enjoyed also by Malaysians

and other people.

"But we must admit that at the moment, we are unable to accept the absolute freedom that you believe in," he said.

"There are certain freedoms that you enjoy which we think we can do without.

"We hope you can tolerate our different sense of values. One day perhaps we will be comfortable with your values.

"But for the moment, we are not. Let us celebrate the difference for that is what makes the world interesting."