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KUALA LUMPUR, SEPT 27/(BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD STRESSED TODAY THAT UMNO WILL CONTINUE TO DEFEND THE POSITION OF THE SPECIAL PRIVILEGES OF THE MALAYS.

THE PRIME MINISTER DESCRIBED THOSE WHO TRIED TO SUBVERT THIS POSITION AS TRAITORS TO THE MALAYS AND BETRAYERS OF ISLAM.

+VOTES ARE OF COURSE IMPORTANT IN A DEMOCRACY, BUT LET US NOT BECAUSE OF VOTES BE PREPARED TO SELL OUR RACE,+ HE SAID WHEN OPENING THE 36TH UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE UMNO COMPLEX HERE.

+LET US NOT DISTORT RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATIONS MERELY TO WIN VOTES AS IS BEING DONE BY A GROUP THAT SUPPOSEDLY HOLDS FIRM TO THE TEACHING OF ISLAM,+ HE SAID.

HE ADVISED THE MALAYS TO STRENGTHEN THEIR NATIONALISTIC SPIRIT BY ENSURING THAT THEIR CAPABILITIES WOULD BE ON PAR WITH THAT OF THE OTHER COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTRY. -- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS ALSO UMNO PRESIDENT, SAID THAT A NATIONALISTIC SPIRIT WAS NOT MEANT TO PROMOTE +CHEST-BEATING+, ARROGANCE OR HAUGHTINESS AMONG THE PEOPLE OR TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO LOOK DOWN ON OTHERS.

+THE SPIRIT OF NATIONALISM IS TO MOTIVATE US TO BE ON PAR WITH, OR EVEN BETTER THAN, OTHERS AND IN THIS WAY WE WILL BECOME A RACE WITH DIGNITY THAT IS HONOURED AND RESPECTED,+ HE ADDED.

+LET NOT ANYONE TARNISH OUR NATIONALIST SPIRIT BY BEHAVIOUR OR ACTS THAT WOULD BRING DISREPUTE TO OUR RACE,+ HE STRESSED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT AS A NATIONAL MALAY ORGANISATION, UMNO WOULD CONTINUE TO HOLD FIRM TO THE SPIRIT OF NATIONALISM.

+THE SPIRIT OF NATIONALISM IN UMNO IS SIMILAR TO THAT MANIFESTED BY THE MUJAHIDDIN OF AFGHANISTAN,+ HE ADDED -- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO SAID THAT WHILE THE MALAY STATES WERE REGARDED AS THE ORIGINAL PLACE OF THE MALAYS, THE OTHER RACES WERE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED AS MALAYSIAN CITIZENS.

+EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE AMONG THEM PEOPLE WHO LEAVE TO RESIDE IN OTHER COUNTRIES, WE CANNOT DENY THAT THE MAJORITY OF THEM WHO RESIDE IN THIS COUNTRY ARE TRULY LOYAL TO MALAYSIA,+

HE SAID THE MALAYS SHOULD OPENLY ADMIT THEIR LOVE FOR COUNTRY AND RACE.

+AS A NATIONAL PARTY, UMNO WILL PROTECT THE MALAYS IN PARTICULAR AS WELL THE PEOPLE AND THE COUNTRY IN GENERAL, FROM EXTERNAL INFLUENCES,+ HE SAID. -- BERNAMA
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