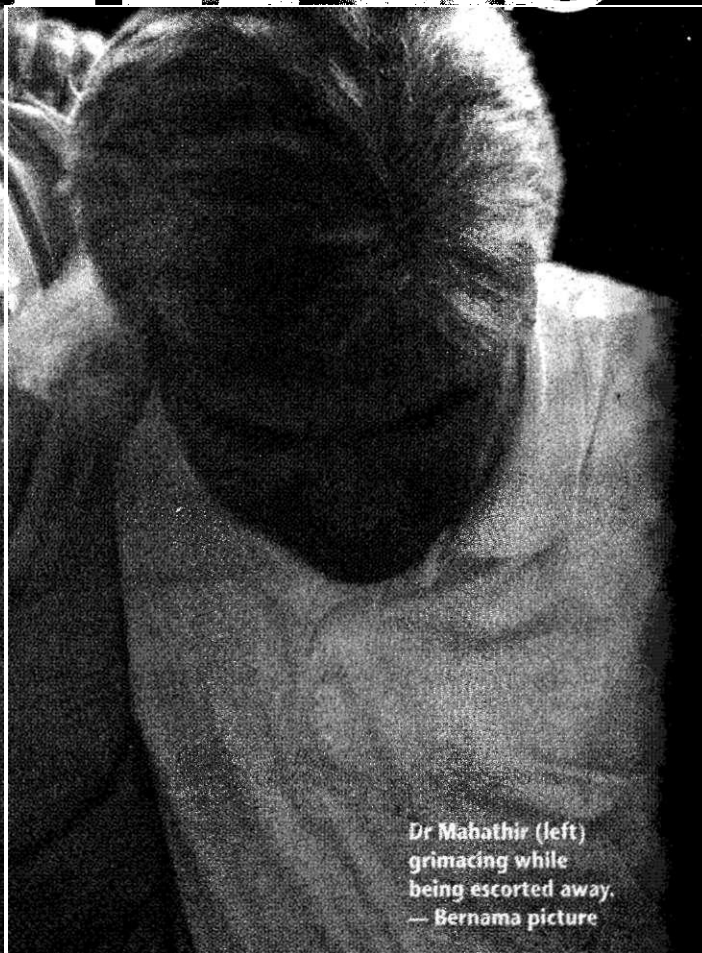


# PEPPER SPRAY HITS DRUM



Dr Mahathir (left) grimacing while being escorted away. — Bernama picture

## Row between two groups of supporters sparks incident

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KOTA BARU: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was hit with a gust of pepper spray yesterday — after a farcical argument between two groups of his supporters at the airport here.

Their point of contention: who had the right to chauffeur him to his hotel.

The former prime minister did not suffer any injuries but the

episode drew a stern rebuke from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and increased the paranoia quotient among those who believe that it was staged to prevent Dr Mahathir from continuing his attacks against the Government.

The incident happened just as the former prime minister was preparing to address some 1,000 people through the sunroof of a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Deputy Inspector-General of

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## Deputy IGP: Man who used spray identified

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Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan said investigations show that an argument broke out between two groups which had organised events to welcome Dr Mahathir to the State — one led by former Pasir Mas MP Datuk Ibrahim Ali and another by former deputy Kuala Krai division chairman Datuk Nik Sapeia Nik Yusoff.

"Each group tried to usher Dr Mahathir to their car. At that time, a man sprayed some form of substance at Datuk Ibrahim Ali's face, which accidentally splashed onto Tun Dr Mahathir's face and his aide," said Musa.

The man has been identified and it is only a matter of time before he is arrested.

A teary-eyed Dr Mahathir was bundled into a car and whisked away to his

hotel. He recovered within a short period and was in fine fettle later as he attacked the Government over its policies.

Later, Dr Mahathir offered his take on the spray attack, suggesting that it was aimed at slopping him from speaking out.

"I am disappointed as this is not our way. We live in a country where the people are not violent."

Musa also denied reports that Ibrahim had been sprayed by men in jackets believed to be from the police special operations force.

He described the reports as defamatory and warned that the police would take action against anyone who spread lies on the Internet and in the media against the police and Government.