

Businessman held over incident involving Dr M

BY IAN MCINTYRE
AND C.A. ZULKIFLE

KOTA BARU: A 53-year-old businessman has been remanded for three days to facilitate police investigations into an incident in which several people, including Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, were hit by a chemical spray.

He was brought before a special magistrate's court sitting here yesterday.

The businessman, a Datuk, was detained at his home in Pasir Tumboh on Friday night by police officers from the state CID division.

The former prime minister, was about to address the crowd from the open sun roof of a Pajero at the Sultan Ismail Petra airport in Pengkalan Chepa at 11am on Friday when he inhaled effects from the spray of a chemical compound from a

three-inch canister.

Police believe the chemical was likely to be from a pepper spray which was usually used by women to ward off attackers.

State CPO SAC (I) Datuk Zulkifli Abdullah told a press conference yesterday that police had recorded statements from 27 eyewitnesses, including seven soldiers from the Eighth Brigade.

The seven military person-

nel were listed as witnesses for now, SAC (I) Zulkifli said, adding that they were engaged as bodyguards by the businessman.

SAC (I) Zulkifli said the police would also hold an identification parade to speed up investigation.

He also said anyone whom the police believe could help in the investigation including politicians would be called in to help determine how and

why the incident happened.

Asked about the level of security provided, SAC (I) Zulkifli said it was a normal standard operating procedure for a dignitary.

"I believe if there were elements out to attack Dr Mahathir, my men would have detected and prevented it. The attack came from a person or persons who somehow had close access to him," he added.