

# Ex-PM recalls attack

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## Dr M: I was told Nik Sapeia allegedly sprayed the chemical

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**KOTA BARU:** Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad told a magistrate's court here that he was informed by his official bodyguard (ADC) that it was marine tycoon Datuk Nik Sapeia Nik Yusof who had discharged a spray when the former arrived at the Sultan Ismail Petra airport on July 28 last year.

Dr Mahathir was the sixth prosecution witness in the on-going trial of Nik Sapeia, 53, who is charged with one count of intentionally causing hurt to four individuals, including the former prime minister, by allegedly discharging a spray containing a chemical substance.

The others were Datuk Paduka Ibrahim Ali, Dr Mahathir's personal physician Dr Mohd Nasir Musa and businessman Suberi Sahidan.

The case, being heard before magistrate Mohd Azman Mustapha, has generated wide attention.

Dr Mahathir is believed to be the first former prime minister to testify in an open-court in Malaysia.

Later, during re-examination, DPP Raja Rosela Raja Toran asked if he could recall at any time after the incident, being told by any bodyguard the identity of the person who had allegedly committed the act.

"I recall my ADC informing me that it was Nik Sapeia who did it," he said.

Dr Mahathir, in his trademark dark "Nehru" jacket, had arrived in Kelantan around 8.45am yesterday before being whisked away under tight security to the courthouse. Asked to state his age, Dr Mahathir confidently replied 81. The crowd burst into laughter when he replied "pensioner" when asked to record his occupation.

Dr Mahathir rarely made eye contact with the accused.

He told the defence that he had known Nik Sapeia for almost 20 years and that he regarded the grey-haired, former state Umno treasurer as a friend.

"I cannot recall having any disagreement with him."

He testified that when he arrived, there was a crowd waiting to greet him, including Ibrahim and Nik Sapeia.

As he was being escorted out of the airport, the crowd surged forward to greet him, while his security detail gestured to people to make way.



**After the testimony:** Dr Mahathir walking out of the Kota Baru court yesterday after he had appeared as the sixth prosecution witness in the on-going trial of Nik Sapeia who is charged with causing hurt.

**»I cannot recall having any disagreement with him«**

TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

Dr Mahathir managed to walk towards a waiting sun-roofed Pajero four-wheel drive.

"I entered the Pajero. Seated on my left was Ibrahim. There was slight chaos but for me it was normal as I am used to crowds greeting me. I wanted to stand up at the Pajero to

address the crowd when suddenly I felt weak."

"I felt breathless, my nose and throat clogged. I coughed briefly. I never experienced such a thing before. I could not stand up although I wanted to. At this time, someone, I think it was my security detail, came towards the left side of the Pajero where I was seated and pulled me away towards another vehicle in front."

"I wanted to speak ... to thank the crowd for coming ... but I could not stand up. I cannot remember the name of the person who dragged me away but I think he was my security man. After that, I was pushed into a car waiting in front and driven away."

He described himself being in a

slight daze. He was then driven to a hotel 15-minutes away.

"Inside the car, I was given a wet towel to wipe my face. I began to feel better and by the time I reached the hotel I had recovered, except for a brief sore throat."

Dr Mahathir said that at that instant he did not think there was any need to lodge a police report.

"It was an incident that did not come across as serious (initially) as I had recovered from the (side-effects)."

He said that he saw Nik Sapeia emerging from a jeep just as he arrived at the hotel.

The court adjourned after Dr Mahathir had spoken for some 60 minutes on the stand. The hearing continues today.