

Umno politician remanded over attack

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KOTA BARU: A veteran Umno politician is facing stiff punishment for the pepper spray incident involving Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Datuk could be jailed up to 10 years and faces expulsion from the ruling party. The businessman was remanded for three days to help in investigations into the incident which took place just after the former prime minister arrived at the airport here.

Police said that two groups — one led by former Umno division chief Datuk Ibrahim Ali and the other by the suspect — were involved in a tussle over who should escort Dr Mahathir from the airport.

As Dr Mahathir was about to address the crowd through the sunroof of a four-wheel-drive vehicle, someone sprayed a substance at Ibrahim which affected those nearby, including Dr Mahathir.

After the incident, Dr Mahathir was bundled into a car. He was not hurt in the incident and continued his criticisms of the Government at two functions.

Kelantan police chief Datuk Zulkifli Abdullah said the suspect was being investigated for causing hurt through the use of poison. He did not rule out the possibility of more arrests.

Police have recorded statements from 27 people, including seven soldiers from the Eighth Brigade Infantry here, hired to protect Dr Mahathir.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim denied that the suspect was also the or-

ganiser of the former prime minister's trip to the State.

He said that the suspect wanted to hijack the programme planned for Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir described Friday's incident as "scary".

"It was frightening. For a short while, I could not breathe, I could not speak. My eyes, nose and lips were stinging," he said after visiting a bakery in Langkawi.

He disagreed with the police preliminary investigations and insisted that the attack was arranged by those wanting to stop his programme in Kelantan.