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## Second echelon leaders

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Umno, which will hold its elections next month, is preparing second echelon leaders to give them the opportunity to lead the Government.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the potential of these leaders would be known after they were given responsibilities.

He added that their capabilities might not be apparent until such time.

"We will continue to prepare second echelon leaders," the Prime Minister said during a special interview with Berita e-Umno, the party's internet newspaper.

"I had also been once viewed by the Chinese as the most useless person, but their opinion changed after I was given the opportunity to prove my ability."

"I am confident they can realise their potential," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said that through Umno's struggle, the people enjoyed a lot of benefits in business, education and other fields and the Malays were respected by others.

Dr Mahathir also commented on certain Malays who were not grateful to the Government.

"In fact, there are those who said that the Malays must be rude and (that they) do not have to be grateful to the Government," he said.

Meanwhile, 237 candidates, including 77 from the Youth and 67 from the Wanita movements, are expected to run for the various posts in the Umno elections next month, unless there are withdrawals. In 1996, 185 had contested.

It is believed that the Umno supreme council which meets tomorrow will also discuss preparations for the three-day general assembly which begins on May 11.

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