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It's polls fever as major Chinese dailies speculate

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THE front pages of major Chinese dailies continued to be dominated by reports about the next general election as rumours surfaced that Parliament would be dissolved within the next few days.

In its front-page story on Friday, China Press reported that dissolution might be within 48 hours following Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's latest round of meetings with the Menteri Besar and Barisan Nasional component leaders.

Nanyang Siang Pau reported that it learnt the Prime Minister had set next Monday as the deadline for all BN component leaders to submit their respective candidate lists. The daily predicted that Parliament would be dissolved on March 5 as the Prime Minister was reportedly "close to making a final decision".

In Sin Chew Daily, a front-page story on Friday revealed that MCA had requested a share of six parliamentary and 15 state seats from the total of 26 parliamentary and 63 state seats newly created after the re-delineation of electoral boundaries.

It also revealed that PPP had asked for a parliamentary seat for its president Datuk M. Kayveas.

A related report in Sin Chew said Cabinet Ministers had also been rescheduling their daily activities to give room for election preparation.

In related news, Oriental Daily News reported that DAP would use an alternative campaign strategy in the election due to budget constraints.

Penang DAP chairman Chow Kon Yeow said instead of relying on the conventional strategy of flooding the streets with posters and banners, his party would opt for the relatively cheaper approach of sending SMS and house-to-house lobbying.

While Penang DAP was left struggling with a tight budget, the party's national secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock said Parliament should not be dissolved as yet.

Kerk was quoted in Nanyang as saying the election should be called only after Parliament had hosted a farewell party for former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in honour of his contributions to the country.