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Daily: Secret talks on MCA leadership crisis

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CITING party sources, Oriental Daily News on Thursday front-paged a report that negotiations were secretly taking place for the MCA's two top leaders, president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and deputy Datuk Seri Lim Ah Lek, to step down before the next general election.

According to the report, the MCA peace plan, which was adopted by the two factions in the party last year following Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's concern over the prolonged power struggle, had been reinitiated to pave the way for a smooth leadership transition ahead of the general election.

Sources revealed that among the Prime Minister's top priorities, after returning from a two-month break, was to bring to a close the seemingly endless power dispute in the MCA.

Although there was no confirmation of an agreement between the two leaders, sources revealed an interesting fact - reservations for the Lee San Choon Hall at Wisma MCA from May 18 to May 25 have been blocked amid speculation that the party might call for an extraordinary general meeting to endorse the party's new leadership. The changes, Oriental Daily reported, would only involve the top two posts with the promotion of two party vice-presidents to replace Dr Ling and Lim.

Another issue which attracted considerable attention from the Chinese press was the "Chinese are less patriotic" remarks attributed to Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Kadir Sheikh Fadzir.

The minister, according to Sin Chew Daily on Wednesday, had denied making the remarks.