SINGAPORE: Political analysts said they expect an intense nine days of campaigning, given that more parties have come forward to contest.

But they added that the polling date of May 7 is no surprise.

"All the processes, procedures pre-election have been done. The PAP has unveiled its candidates, they've released their manifesto and I think they've been working the ground for some time," said Asst Professor Eugene Tan, School of Law, Singapore Management University (SMU).

Speaking to students at a pre-election seminar at the SMU, Dr Derek da Cunha said the opposition has had more time to prepare for this General Election (GE) compared to previous ones.

He identified three strong opposition groups - the Workers' Party (WP), the Singapore People's Party (SPP), and the National Solidarity Party (NSP).

"They seem to be more organised, more disciplined in terms of the opposition parties, and I think this is what will make this particular election not just interesting, but in some of the constituencies, they'll be very keenly fought," said da Cunha.

So far, six opposition parties have indicated interest with some releasing their manifestos and finalising their respective line-ups weeks ago.

Now, all eyes will be on the few days leading up to the polls.

There are two things that will happen in the midst of this period. First, there is the May Day Rally, with a speech to be delivered by the Prime Minister. Second, the release of the Grow and Share package.

But observers have mixed views on how much these would impact the decisions of voters.

"Having yet another, so-called morale-boosting speech given on May Day may not add anything new to what we've already heard. Although we'll have to wait and see on what is actually said by the Prime Minister on May 1," said da Cunha.

"Cost of living, bread and butter issues, income gap - these are some of the big issues that would be on top of voter's minds. And I think nothing like the May Day events where given the symbiotic relationship between the PAP and the NTUC, that they would try to use that to re-affirm their commitment and support to improving the lives of the average Singaporean," said Asst Professor Tan.
And given the likelihood of more contests, analysts expect this GE to be an intensive nine-day affair.

- CNA /ls