Strict terms set for new political parties

By ISAAC NICHOLAS

STRINGENT mandatory requirements must be met by political parties that wish to register, registrar of political parties and candidates Paul Bengo said yesterday.

Mr Bengo was responding to questions raised by political parties on the eve of general elections and what criteria are there to limit political parties.

He said 43 political parties were registered for the 2002 general elections and so far, five political parties had merged with larger parties while 14 had been deregistered.

He said two new political parties, PNG Liberal Party and People's Democratic Movement had so far registered, bringing the total number of political parties to 25.

Mr Bengo said application for three new political parties had been received including the New Generation Party led by Bart Philemon, People's Party led by Enga Governor Peter Ipatas and Star Alliance Party, a group believed to be from Enga.

He said new political parties wishing to register must meet stringent requirements including membership, financial capacity and was able to sustain itself including yearly financial reports.

He said this yesterday when briefing a group of party executives, who will leave this weekend for a 10-day visit of political parties and related institutions in Australia.

The trip was funded by the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) in Canberra after initial discussions held between Mr Bengo, PNG High Commissioner to Canberra and Dr Michael Hagan of CDI.

"I am indeed grateful for CDI to have followed up the initiative and coordinated and facilitated all the arrangements for this study visit."

Mr Bengo said future trips should be discussed between CDI and his office about cost sharing.

The first group to travel this weekend include Amos Daniel of the People's Progress Party, Moses Taian of Pangu Pati, Joyce Grant of National Alliance, Monica Hasimani of PNG Green Party and Samuel Kopamu of People's Heritage Party.

Two staff of the Opposition Leader's office will be travelling with the group.

PNG is part of the international group arranged by CDI which will include representatives from Fiji, Indonesia, Timor Leste and Vanuatu.

The executives of political parties will look at functions of political parties, party system, election system, membership, policy development, campaign strategies, decision making strategy, role of women in politics, and role of the media.

Mr Bengo also provided each member background information on the Organic Law on political parties and candidates and wished them a productive study visit.