Defaulting MPs and parties face referral

THIRTY one members of parliament and 35 political parties will be referred to the Ombudsman Commission by the registrar of political parties if they do not submit returns for the 2012 elections today.

Registrar Dr. Alphonse Gelu said yesterday these MPs and parties were already defaulters who had been fined daily since Nov 7 last year.

The Organic Law on Political Parties and Candidates requires parties (section 88) and successful candidates, or MPs, (section 89) to submit a full account of how their elections were financed.

All returns were to be submitted three months after the return of writs, due on Nov 1 last year.

When 90% of the parties and MPs did not meet that deadline, the registrar extended the deadline by seven days to Nov 7.

At the end of that deadline, defaulting parties attracted a fine of K50 per day and MPs faced a fine of K20 per day.

All 31 MPs and 35 political parties now owe the office of the registrar of political parties, in addition to the 2012 election returns, a substantial amount of money.

Gelu would not name names out of respect but all those who are referred to the Ombudsman Commission will be named.

He said those referred could face referrals to the public prosecutor and face tribunals which could lead to dismissals.

In an attempt to stop further such misdemeanors, the registry is embarking on a quarterly educational workshop beginning next month.

Operated in conjunction with the Canberra-based Centre for Democratic Institutions, the workshops are aimed at encouraging political parties to understand the law, to actively get involved in membership recruitment, fund raising and how to campaign.