

Public blamed for the varsity unrests

By NATION Reporter

HOSTILE attitude by wananchi towards students is partly to blame for causing the frequent unrests at the university, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, Prof. Joseph Mungai, said yesterday.

Addressing a Press Club luncheon Prof. Mungai said false divisions and assumptions between the student community, lecturers and the administration have a direct bearing on the behaviour of the students.

Prof. Mungai said it was unfair to shoulder the whole responsibility of instilling good conduct into the students on the university.

He said: "When these students come to the university, they are already 19 years old, how then can we be asked about their behaviour at this stage?"

Prof. Mungai added: "When you ask me about their demonstrations and unbecoming

conduct such as the distribution of uncalled for leaflets and what-have-you, I also ask you as a parent, how many times has your son or daughter demonstrated while under your care for those 19 years?"

Prof. Mungai told the club that he accepted the concept of a university being regarded as an "ivory tower" saying: "This is the highest institution of learning and must be considered a very expensive place".

Prof. Mungai said that some of the six students who were expelled following the October 7 demonstrations, had appealed to the university for readmission.

He stressed: "The question of the 7,222 students on both campuses is one all of us must address ourselves to and ask: "What would I expect from my son, daughter, brother or sister at the university? What would I like them to be?"

He said that the university was

playing a crucial role in our society today by simplifying and transmitting knowledge for the realisation of development strategies.

In the past, Prof. Mungai said, the university was regarded as a reservoir of knowledge and noted: "The university must now go beyond that process of developing, storing and transmitting knowledge."

Calling on the elite to play a major role of transmitting knowledge with a view to alleviating poverty and ignorance, Prof. Mungai said the majority of Kenyans still lived in despotic conditions "for whom the university must be the only source of reading material and general knowledge education."

Prof. Mungai said the university was negotiating for funds to build a giant Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library.

He said an Institute of Swahili Research and other African languages had been launched.



●PROF. MUNGAI