

# THE ANVIL

*THE ANVIL is a School of Journalism student training newspaper. The views expressed in the newspaper are not necessarily those of the School of Journalism or the University of Nairobi. THE ANVIL is published on Mondays, except during the vacation and examination periods.*

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## Challenge to Graduands

AS THE country prepares to celebrate its 25th anniversary of independence, Nairobi University is today celebrating its 17th graduation ceremony. The developments in both cases are nothing short of spectacular.

Having attained autonomous university status following a break from the University of East Africa, Nairobi University has since 1970 conferred degrees and diplomas to its own graduands.

While the procedure of conferment has remained basically the same, the number of graduands has consistently risen over the years. Each year sees the Nyanjiru Court shrinking with little space to accommodate the young people who have come to the end of an academic season.

The Court has become so small that there is a likelihood that the university may soon be forced to look for an alternative graduation square to accommodate the ever increasing number of graduands.

This increase in the number of those who graduate each year has correlation with the general population trends in this country. Primary and secondary schools have continued to grow, consequently, many have gained place in our universities. Inevitably, the graduand population has shot up.

In 1987 the University of Nairobi released some 1,980 graduands of whom 1,546 were awarded first degrees, 318 masters degrees, and 16 doctorates. Today 1642 first degrees, 284 masters degree and 13 doctorates will be awarded this afternoon.

While these figures appear deceptively small, the number of first degree holders will have tripled when the present second year students graduate in 1990.

The rising number of student population is a logical function of our national development. As we plan for long term developments in other fields, there is need to gear institutional structural expansion to the needs of the country rather than solving problems on the spur of the moment. This may be a check to current congestion in our public universities.

It requires that while we expand our institutions of higher learning, we keep watch on developments that may emphasize the quantity rather than the quality of the graduates who come out of the university.

While note is taken of the need for university education for all, the economic imperatives are such that only a limited number can have university education.

The challenge therefore is on these few who benefit from this education for the benefit of the nation. Those who graduate here today must bear in mind that they belong to this country and the nation expects from them active involvement in building a Kenya we all would like to see.