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UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN CRISIS

By Eliza Chege
and
Tom Mshindi

The Nairobi University Library is in deep financial need which has critically hampered its operations.

The Deputy Librarian, Mr. Johnson Abukutsa, told the Anvil in an interview that the library has had to cut its periodical subscription list by over 50 per cent because of the financial constraints plaguing the institution.

The constraints, Mr. Abukutsa said, had led to "very little development in terms of additions in publications."

He said during the 1983/84 academic year, the library requested about KSh. 15 million for books, periodicals, equipment and furniture but received nothing.

"Last academic year, we requested about KSh. 13 million for books and periodicals and only received KSh. 4.4 million.

He noted that according to the present demands the library had proposed about KSh. 17.3 million but that no decision had been taken since the proposal was still under consideration.

He said this uncertainty on the availability of funds had caused the library to have no definite budget for the past five years.

On the recent book donation, Abukutsa said many of the books were "not immediately relevant to the local situation."

He stressed that he would like to see the Nairobi University press becoming operational so that the materials badly needed for research and teaching by the university community can be made available.

He argued that the reason why commercial publishers had failed to meet this demand was because most of the academically valuable books were not seen as a viable commercial venture.

"Such commercial publishers are primarily concerned with making profit which they cannot always do by publishing the books required by us," he said.

He noted that the Nairobi university press must strive to reduce these costs if it is to succeed.

The Nairobi University Press will publish its first book early next year, its secretary, Mr. G.G. Wainaina, said.

Speaking to the Anvil, Mr. Wainaina said the project had been on the drawing board for many years but has now finally taken off the ground. It has already been established on the main campus and will be run as a department.

Said Mr. Wainaina: "It has been registered as a liability

company but will be run as a non-profit making organisation. All the money coming in will be ploughed back into publishing."

The Press, set up with funds donated by the British-American Tobacco Company (BAT) will publish material mainly from the higher institutions of learning and from the public. The emphasis, however, will be on academic books.

Visitors Blamed for Hall Thefts

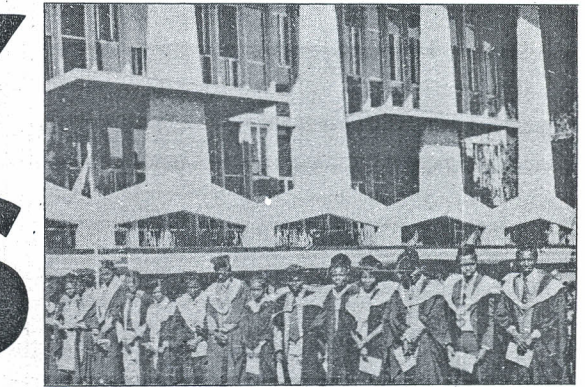
By Eliza Chege

Visitors are the main suspects in the spate of thefts at the university halls of residence, according to a security official.

Mr. Charles Osir, the USAB chief security officer, says students who allow their visitors to spend the night in their rooms are to blame. "Some go to the extent of giving friends who work in town their keys," the security chief observed.

Asked by the Anvil whether there was 'inside ring' organising the thefts, he said that he was aware of a ring of students operating in hall 10 who have been stealing from the others. But these are still at large.

"Some use crowbars or sharp metal instruments made



Gandhi memorial library in the background.

The Press has approached various national and international firms to undertake co-publishing. The aim, he said, is to reach a wider overseas market.

On pricing, Mr. Wainaina said, although books were expensive, theirs would be reasonably priced. "However,

we must recover costs of production," he said.

The books published will be marketed through the university bookshop and other outlets within the country.

Mr. Wainaina said the perpetual problem of book scarcity would soon be a thing of the past.

in industrial area to break lockers", Osir noted.

He said that his intention was not simply to minimise but to eradicate theft. Security in the vulnerable halls 10, 13, II has been tightened he said.

"My office has stationed two security guards at different points in each of the halls during the day and there is extensive night patrol," he explained.

Mr. Osir asked the students to cooperate with his office in maintaining security. He referred to incidents where students had abused the security personnel when questioned where they were taking items from the halls.

Mr. Osir noted that cooperation was necessary because USAB security office had introduced a new regulation

which required students leaving the halls with any appliance to identify themselves before being allowed to leave.

He refuted claims that USAB security office had become lax, adding that the situation in the past eight months had improved considerably. He could not rule out the possibility of cleaners being involved in the thefts. He said that the cleaners knew what indiscipline on their part entailed.

He assured students that his office and the police were presently ensuring that security is restored.

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