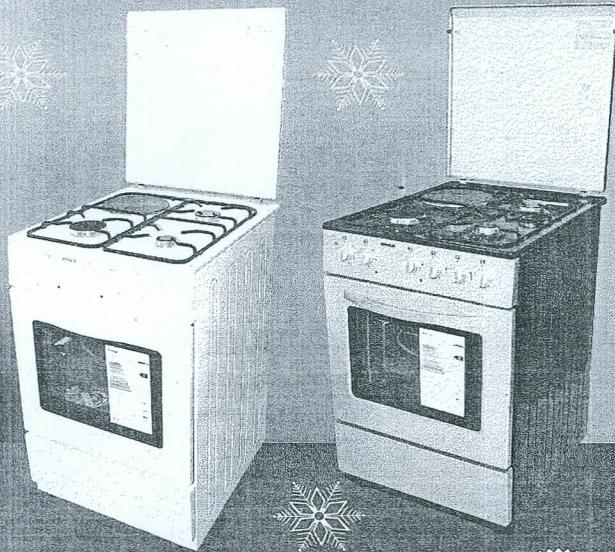


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SUCCESSION | Mbithi takes over next month



FILE | NATION

Incoming University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor Peter Mbithi at a recent press conference. He will officially take over in January

University of Nairobi boss pledges reforms

Incoming VC talks about his plans, jobs and strikes as he prepares to take over

BY SAMWEL BORN MAINA
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Prepare for radical changes at the country's oldest university, its incoming vice-chancellor has said.

And Prof Peter Mbithi knows it will not be an easy task transforming the university, which is in the spotlight over the hooliganism of its protesting students.

His vision is to turn the university into a world class institution, which will play a monumental role in the country's economic growth.

Prof Mbithi, who will formally assume office next month, wants UoN to be one of the top three universities in Africa.

He will do this by first starting the construction of new hostels to accommodate the ballooning number of students.

New courses and programmes that respond to the needs of the market will then be introduced to address the issue of unemployment.

Thousands of students leaving universities find it difficult to access the job market and calls have been made in the past to introduce new courses or adjust the existing ones.

The vice-chancellor says students unrest will become a thing of the past.

"We will be firm about discipline. We will draft regulations that govern them but they will be involved in the drafting of

the laws," he said.

Prof Mbithi said the University would start a robust fund to rehabilitate students and help those facing financial challenges.

The institution will also enter into partnership with local universities to improve the quality of learning.

Prof Mbithi told the *Nation* in his office yesterday that discipline among students and staff would be non-negotiable. These, he hopes, will make UoN "a beautiful place to be in."

"We will engage the students

“Professors should be allowed to teach in other universities where there are no lecturers.”

Prof Peter Mbithi

BACKGROUND

Vet reports at crack of dawn

Devout Catholic: Born and raised in Kangundo, Prof Mbithi is married and has four daughters – two of them lawyers, an engineer and a doctor. He is a staunch Catholic and an early bird who is in office at 6am. Although he achieved a rare dream, Prof Mbithi never anticipated that he would be appointed the VC but applied for the job. He was a departmental chairman at Kabete.

and address their grievances in time. The very few number who go into the streets will therefore have no reason to hold demonstrations," Prof Mbithi explained.

He is also rooting for experienced professors to hold different jobs especially if they are working in companies.

"A professor should not be contained as they are an asset. We would like professors in industries to come and teach in universities because they have experience in those fields. The professors should be allowed to teach in other local universities where there are a few lecturers," Prof Mbithi said.

The sharing is for the good of the country. "Being a first born, it will not be ridiculous if you do not help your younger siblings with bus fare. Likewise, UoN will not have a problem helping other universities achieve their goals," Prof Mbithi says.

Marking delays

Students have oftentimes complained of delays in marking and other assessments.

The VC noted that lecturers and students should have a common vision.

"We will tell our teaching staff to address students' issues properly such as marking which will be done promptly. Students will also be required to attend class."

The VC announced said a pedagogy centre would be set up to "inspire growth and real teaching." He also plans to prioritise sports in his agenda.

"We will have the best sports facilities, start sports scholarships and build good complexes so that we can churn out the best. We want to hear our name called out in major events globally like the Olympics," the VC said.