

VARSITY UNION MATIBA ERUPTS

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By DAVID MAINA

COMBATIVE Ford-Asili Chairman Kenneth Matiba yesterday joined the fray in the university union saga by demanding that the national staff body be registered immediately.

Reacting to President Moi's statement on Friday that the government would not register the union, Mr Matiba said this was an infringement on the academic staff's right of association.

But Education Minister Joseph Kamotho retorted to Mr Matiba, saying his statement had no merit and was geared only to making political capital for the Ford-Asili leader.

Mr Kamotho said the best way of resolving the crisis was to follow President Moi's advice that the lecturers now on strike in demand for the union's registration should, instead, form staff associations on their respective campuses.

Said the minister: "The President told them that they are free to form staff associations. Whatever they are doing now, they are doing it at their own peril."

Using extremely strong language — that often bordered on rudeness — Mr Matiba said President Moi's position was tantamount to "dictatorship".

Said Mr Matiba, who is also the Member of Parliament for



Mr Matiba



Mr Kamotho



Prof Gichaga



Mr Imanyara

Kiharu: "In a working democracy, the President should not and must not have to arbitrate on an issue for which a mechanism for arbitration is provided for in the constitution."

Mr Matiba's position found support yesterday from former Ford-Kenya secretary-general Gitobu Imanyara, who said from

his hospital bed that the matter should be left to judiciary to resolve.

Lecturers at Nairobi, Kenyatta, Egerton and Moi universities have been on strike since last November 29, protesting the Government refusal to register the proposed Universities

Academic Staff Union (UASU).

The association's interim chairman, Dr Korwa Adar, of Nairobi University was quoted in the Press yesterday as having vowed that the strike would continue despite President Moi's advice that they form staff associations.

Dr Adar, who addressed a press conference along with UASU's other interim officials, said the striking dons were prepared to pursue their cause to the bitter end. He said the dons needed a national union apart from staff associations.

Supporting them, Mr Matiba said the registration was a dispute between the Registrar-General and the academic staff, a matter which should go to court if need be.

Mr Matiba said the labour practices should not be determined by the practices in other countries. The Kenyan constitution guaranteed the right to associate.

The Government, he said, should also keep off the labour movement and declared that his party would systematically document all instances of misuse of law by the executive.

But Mr Kamotho said in a telephone interview that the striking dons should heed what President Moi said on New Year's day and what Labour Minister Philip Masinde said on Saturday. They should form staff associations.

The Minister emphasised that each university had its act under