

Government moves to address road accidents

By Martin Kitubi

Travellers often say a prayer before embarking on a journey. The words might be different, but the objective is the same - to seek protection from the creator. Over the years, the Kampala-Masaka, Kampala-Gulu and Kampala-Jinja highways combined have registered more road accidents than other roads in the country.

A range of factors such as reckless driving and drink driving are said to be the main causes of accidents on these highways. In a bid to combat these accidents, the Ministry of Works and Transport embarked on investigations to establish the main causes of these accidents, which on many occasions are fatal.

In the works and transport sector performance report of the 2017/18 financial year, the ministry investigated three fatal accidents with the aim of coming up with lasting solutions to road accidents.

The ministry is optimistic that with these findings, they will be in position to address the challenges on these highways.

In addition, several other interventions have also been carried out to combat road carnage.

These include one road safety inspection along major national road corridors, especially on the Kampala-Kafu road; research in two key areas of road safety, that is, effectiveness of express penalty scheme regulations. The ministry also conducted driving schools' regulation with emphasis on road user behaviour on crossing points.

In this regard, a total of 33 driving schools out of the targeted 80 were inspected and licensed to operate in the country. According to the ministry, the major causes of road accidents are attributed to reckless driving with its roots in driving schools. These are some of the achievements by the works and transport sector in the 2017/18 financial year.

PSV Licences

A total of 13,675 more passenger service vehicles (PSVs) were licensed and monitored in the 2017/2018 financial year, according to the Ministry of Works and Transport.

However, the numbers are lower than the targeted 20,000 PSVs that were to be licensed



The Busia one-stop border post that was launched in February 2018. Such initiatives by the Works and Transport Ministry and other government agencies are meant to secure border and road operations

and monitored by the ministry. The figure includes buses, taxis and cabs under the transport sector.

The numbers of the licensed and monitored companies are part of the achievements which were highlighted by the ministry in the works and transport sector performance report 2017/18.

The ministry also introduced online registration for PSVs to attain operation licences. The move, according to the ministry, will, among other things, lead to convenience where all operators, including those upcountry, are no longer required to come to Kampala for registration.

The licence portal part of the ministry website specifies the purpose of registration, application fee, validity, renewal fee and licence type.

It also specifies the requirements for one to attain licenses and charges for both buses and taxis in the country. This has created a one-stop centre for all Ugandans, especially those upcountry, to register with ease.

PSV badges

The ministry also processed a total of 1,231 driver badges in the last financial year. The number of drivers with badges is growing and this means that many of them are appreciating the need to have badges. It is a requirement for all bus drivers to have badges, and recently the ministry proposed the same for taxi drivers in the country.

THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

The ministry has made strides towards improving the aviation industry in the country.

This includes among others, amending, reviewing and introducing new laws, regulations and policies for the sector.

Among the key policies is the National Civil Aviation Policy aimed at promoting the achievement of the country's strategic goals. The policy also intends to protect interests and of users of the air transport services.

The ministry has also undertaken consultative workshops to discuss the National Civil Aviation Policy Draft and the ideas are being incorporated to finalise the draft policy.

The ministry has the Civil Aviation (amendment) Bill 2017, which is intended to harmonise the Act with the Chicago Convention and its annexes. The Bill is before

the parliamentary committee on physical infrastructure and a consultative retreat was held in November 2017 to discuss the areas of amendment.

This, coupled with the procurement of the national airliners, will shape Uganda's aviation industry.

It should be noted that the country is developing the second international airport to enhance transport and supplies, especially with the oil activities. The Kabaale International Airport located in Hoima district will also be used as an export route for several local products.

The ministry procured supervision consultation for development of the airport, with 95% of the works on the geo-technical and hydro-logical investigation as part design completed.

Aggrey Bagiire, the State Minister for Transport, recently told *New Vision* that the move would enable the country reduce and combat road accidents caused by reckless taxi drivers. According to the minister, the registration for commuter taxi PSV badges would be mandatory in the near future.

"The issuance of transport badges to taxi operators will instill discipline among reckless drivers. Any driver who causes an accident will lose the badge and will be banned from the transport industry," he said.

Bagiire noted that issuing of PSV badges to bus drivers had contributed to reduced road accidents in the country.

"Bus drivers are now well-behaved. They once protested against transport badges, but later agreed and the industry is moving on well," he said.

The minister anticipated protests from commuter taxi drivers, but said they would liaise with the Police and other security agencies to ensure that the new badge policy is implemented in the country.

According to the Police Annual report 2016, about 3,503 persons were killed in road accidents, while 10,981 were seriously injured and admitted to hospitals.

The report further indicates that road user behaviour was the major cause of the road accidents



A traffic police officer using a speed gun on the road

recognised our job, and we will go for them."

Water transport inspections
However, the country still lags behind, especially on inspection of water vessels.

According to works and transport sector performance report 2017/18, only two foreign vessels were inspected.

The ministry had set a target of 40 foreign vessels to undergo inspection for conformity to the national, regional and international maritime standards.

The low turn-up was attributed to the fact that companies shunned the inspection exercise with only two turning up.

According to the ministry, 200 out of 201 non-convictional inland water vessels were inspected for licensing.

This was attributed to the fact that, the ministry received increased funding for vessel inspection compared to the previous years.

Nonetheless, six convictional inland water vessels were inspected out of the 20 convictional vessels operating in inland water for seaworthiness and certificates were issued.

This was so because non-conviction vessels were prioritised since they are deemed unsafe and yet are the most commonly used kind of water transport.

One-stop border posts

Among the key achievements of the works and transport sector is construction of one-stop border posts (OSBP). They include one at Busia to serve both Kenya and Uganda, others at Katuna and Mirama Hills to serve Uganda and Rwanda, and another at Elegu in Nimule to serve Uganda and South Sudan.

According to the sector performance report, construction of the Elegu OSBP is substantially complete and only 30% construction of exit roads at Malaba OSBP has been completed.

The works ministry said the contractor for construction of the Katuna OSBP (phase 1) was suspended in November 2016 due to lack of funds.

These projects, which are funded by the governments and donors, are intended to, among others, improve IT infrastructure and harmonise working procedures on both sides of the border.

The project involve training border agency staff, freight forwarders and traders.