245,384 MOTORCYCLES, 4,525 GOVT VEHICLES REGISTERED SO FAR

GEN. KATUMBA PROMISES TO END NUMBER PLATE DELAYS

By Charles Etukuri

The Government has promised to speed up the registration and clearance of newly imported vehicles following a petition from dealers.

Businessmen dealing in second-hand cars had earlier petitioned the Minister of Works and Transport, Gen. Katumba Wamala, over delays in clearance by the Uganda Revenue Authority and the Russian number plate manufacturing firm Joint Stock Company Global Security (JSCG). JSCG was contracted to manufacture and install tracking chips in Uganda's car and motorcycle number plates.

During a meeting attended by representatives of clearing agents, the Police, Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), Used Car Dealer Association of Uganda (UCDAU) and Uganda Clearing Industry and Forwarders Association (UCIFA) at Méstil Hotel in Kampala yesterday, it was resolved that JSCG quickens the number plate production process. Katumba said he was happy the meeting had agreed to resolve key outstanding issues. "At the end of this meeting, we have been able to find a solution. One of the big complaints was why it takes four to five days for importers to have number plates. That has been resolved and we have agreed that once everything is done, one should be able to get their number plate the next day," Katumba said.

The minister promised to assess the clearing agents' request to have key people clear cars on Saturday.

He also supported the decision to get rid of fake clearing agents at border points. "I highly support this because there have been several quacks who have been taking advantage of people who want to have their vehicles on the road quickly," Katumba said.

Winstone Katushabe, the commissioner for transport regulation and safety at the ministry, revealed that the digital registration plates programme had been rolled out in phases. He said to date, they had registered 245,384 motorcycles, 4,525 government vehicles and 100,791 private ones.

"According to the transition, which was two years, all government vehicles on the road are supposed to have digital number plates. The Ministry is directing police to impound all government cars with old number plates because they are on the road illegally," Katushabe said.

Katushabe, however, noted that some of the applications for the new number plates had been queried over missing/misaligned verification account, incorrect engine number declared, incorrect model declared, incorrect year of manufacture declared, incorrect colour, incorrect vehicle purpose declared and incorrect chassis number.

URA assistant commissioner in charge of field services, Dr Geoffrey Okaka, who represented the Commissioner General, noted that the traders' concerns would be resolved.

"To address them, URA proposes a closer co-operation with the ministry to harmonise systems and reduce bureaucracy," he said.

Kezekia Bwire, the UCIFA vice-chairman, said all that is left is implementation.

"We successfully raised all the issues we had as stakeholders in the motor vehicle industry. It was our first direct engagement with the line minister and we hope they will handle our matters urgently," Bwire said.

PHOTOS BY ALFRED OCHWO



From left: Geoffrey Okaka, the assistant commissioner, field services at URA customs, Katumba and Katushabe during the meeting held at Mestil Hotel

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