

LETTER OF THE DAY

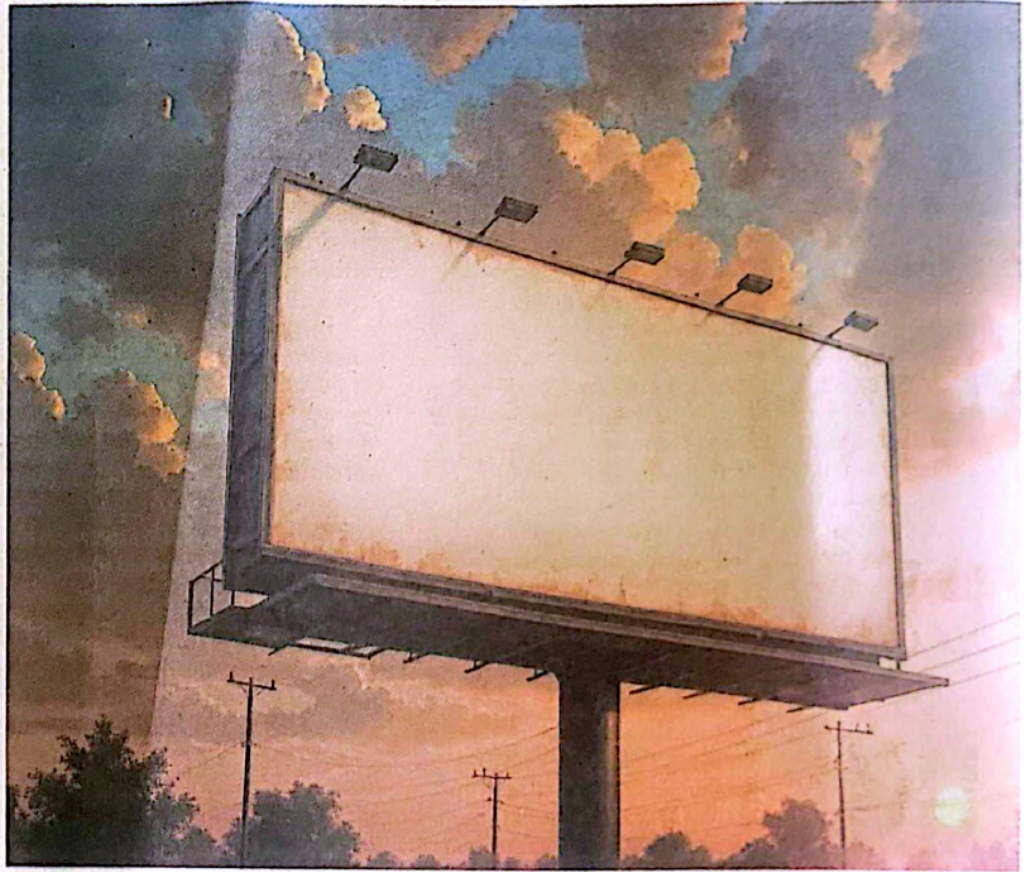
Time for KCCA to regain control of Kampala's outdoor advertising industry

As someone who has witnessed Kampala's transformation over the decades, I've seen the outdoor advertising industry evolve from a structured, regulated sector into a chaotic free-for-all. In the 1990s, pioneers like Todate Advertising, Screen Ad, Atom Outdoor, Capital Outdoor, and Corpcom dominated the landscape. Back then, the Kampala City Council (KCC), now the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), maintained firm oversight. Erecting a billboard without approval from the relevant departments, including public relations, engineering, and finance, was virtually impossible. This ensured order, safety, and a steady stream of revenue for the city. Mr Steven Kinyera and Mr Simon Muhumuza weren't perfect, but there was order.

Fast forward to around 2018, when everything began to unravel. A court ruling halted KCCA's ability to collect dues from outdoor advertising companies and even mandated refunds of previously collected funds. What followed has been a relentless barrage of legal battles, leaving the authority hamstrung and the industry in disarray.

KCCA has forfeited billions of shillings in potential revenue funds desperately needed to maintain and develop our bustling capital. Worse still, this vacuum has turned Kampala into a visual nightmare, with billboards sprouting up on nearly every corner, roadside, and intersection.

Gone are the days of sensible regulations such as the 100-metre spacing requirement between structures. Today, billboards crowd each other within mere 10 metres or less, clutter-



ing sightlines and overwhelming the urban aesthetic. One can't help but ask: Who is authorising these erections? If KCCA isn't collecting dues, who is allocating sites to these companies? It's baffling and frankly unacceptable that the engineering department continues to supervise constructions while the authority reaps no financial benefits. This bizarre arrangement suggests a system that is either utterly incompetent or, worse being exploited.

The risks extend far beyond aesthetics and lost revenue. Many of these billboards are precariously placed, some even arching over busy roads in blatant disregard for safety standards. It's only a matter of time

before a strong wind, a vehicular mishap, or structural failure triggers a catastrophic accident, endangering motorists, pedestrians, and nearby residents. We've already seen glimpses of such hazards during the downpours of late 2025.

This mess demands immediate intervention from the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Kampala Capital City Affairs, which oversees KCCA.

The government cannot continue to stand by while KCCA turns a blind eye. It's time to resolve the legal impasse, reinstate a fair revenue-collection system, and enforce stringent guidelines for site allocation, spacing, and structural integrity.

KCCA should either resume its mandate to regulate and manage the industry, or that mandate be handed to a body that will.

Outdoor advertising can be a vibrant economic driver, generating jobs and promoting businesses, but not at the expense of public safety and urban order. Kampala deserves better, a city that reflects progress, not pandemonium.

Let this be a wake-up call: Re-organise the industry now, before the billboards come crashing down on us all.

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