

THE TIMELINE

with Mark Peter Sseggiriinya

Welcome to SUV parenting

Childhood milestones used to be humble and predictable. You cry, crawl, walk, and if life is smiling at your family that year, you get a balloon and cake from Shoprite. But young Rayan said, let me disrupt this industry. At just five years old, he unlocked a new achievement; car owner before knowing left from right. Somewhere between cake-cutting and juice spills, his mother, Hajjat Hadijah Namyalo, decided this birthday needed less Happy Birthday and more Narcos meets parenting. A brand-new Jetour SUV rolled into the compound and in that moment, every Ugandan adult remembered the bicycle they were promised next term for eight consecutive years and never saw.

First came the calm delegation: "Awww, mother's love." "Focused parenting." These are people with peace, stable Wi-Fi, and probably have their fuel cards on the government. Then came the rest of us, the veterans of don't-touch-that-remote childhoods. At five, I was receiving beatings in installments; this one is receiving horsepower. But you know we cannot stop at jokes. We quickly opened Excel in our minds. And then, naturally, investigations began. In this country, money must explain itself. Threads were opened. WhatsApp groups activated. Even people who owe mobile loans started asking for financial transparency. It felt like Hajjat had watched *Ozark* and took notes. Meanwhile, Rayan, the CEO of this whole situation, was just there enjoying vibes, probably thinking it is a new toy. Completely unaware he had triggered a national workshop on inequality, parenting, and soft life distribution.

Majority were not buying the calm explanations. "Her salary cannot even buy a motorcycle, yet she is dropping about Shs200m on a Jetour for a five-year-old?" Netizens roasted the timing, especially with a heavy taxation and people struggling for basics. "At five, I got a slap for breaking a cup. This one got keys to a car." Critics vented hard: "While we are being overtaxed and chased from our roadside businesses, government officials are buying luxury toys for toddlers." Others turned it personal: We were promised bicycles that never came. Now children are getting SUVs before they can spell their names. Even serious voices joined in, questioning how public office holders afford such displays amid widespread poverty. Hajjati did not stay silent. She fired back with bank statements, insisting her wealth predates the current role and that the gift was planned years in advance. For most, he is a loud reminder of the gap between the connected few and the rest grinding it out. Whether genuine love or questionable means, the bar in this country keeps changing.



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