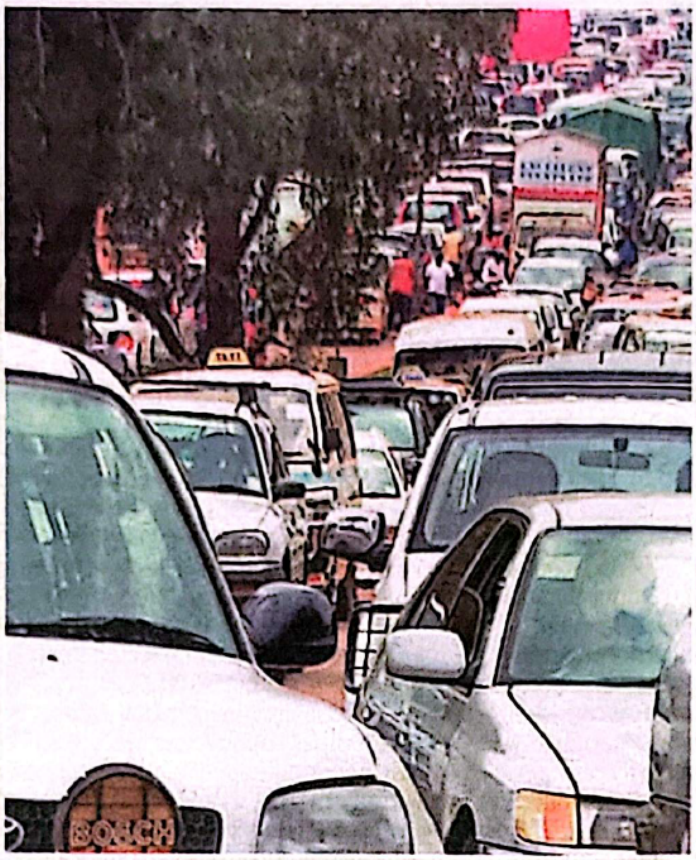
LETTER OF THE DAY

Kampala roads: Where everyone is a VIP



If you own a car and dare to drive it in Kampala, congratulations, you have signed up for a daily reality show. No auditions needed. Just fuel, patience, and a strong sense of humour.

There is something beautifully ironic about how peaceful Uganda has become. We are so calm, so free, that we have extended that freedom to the roads where rules are now treated more like friendly suggestions than actual laws. After all, why follow traffic regulations when you can explore your hidden talents?

Take, for instance, the new generation of "road footballers." You know them. The ones who treat traffic like a midfield, dribbling between lanes as if they're auditioning for FIFA. Indicators are optional, mirrors are decorative, and other drivers are merely cones in a training drill. If you've ever wondered where Uganda's next football stars are, kindly check the Kampala roads at 7:30 am.

Then we have the "VIPs of convenience." These are ordinary citizens who wake up one day and decide that one-way roads are a matter of perspective. Why follow the flow when you can create your own? There is a special kind of confidence in driving against traffic at 80 km/h, staring down law-abiding motorists as if they are the ones in the wrong.

And just when you think you've seen it all, an ambulance siren cuts through the chaos. A noble call for the right of way. A moment for humanity. A chance for drivers to cooperate and save a life. But wait, this is Kampala. Behind that ambulance is a convoy of opportunists who have suddenly discovered their "emergency." Ten cars glued to its tail, moving like ducklings until of course, the road reminds them that physics still exists.

Gridlock ensues, confusion peaks, and the very life the ambulance was trying to save is now delayed by people who simply wanted to beat traffic.

Not to be outdone, there is the rise of the "budget siren bosses." Private vehicles are usually tinted beyond recognition now conveniently equipped with illegal sirens. Because in Uganda, we have collectively agreed that any siren must belong to someone important. Only to discover it's just a regular trader from Kiseka market, late for business and unwilling to queue with the rest of us.

Of course, we must acknowledge that traffic in Kampala is not perfect. Far from it. Infrastructure gaps exist, public transport systems are still catching up, and urban planning continues to evolve. But let us not pretend that we are innocent victims. To a large extent, we are architects of our own delays.

A few indisciplined drivers, those "rotten tomatoes," manage to disrupt entire roads, entire schedules, and entire days. And the most fascinating part? They rarely notice the damage they leave behind. By the time the chaos unfolds, they are long gone, probably congratulating themselves on "beating jam."

Meanwhile, the rest of us are left navigating a transport system where taxis operate like secret societies. Doors require a special technique to close, seats tell stories of a thousand passengers, and cleanliness is a concept that clearly missed orientation. As for fumigation, well, that is a luxury reserved for dreams.

So where do we go from here? As authorities continue to explore long-term solutions from regulating boda bodas to improving infrastructure, there is an immediate fix staring us right in the mirror, and that is personal discipline.

Position more traffic officers on the roads. Enforce penalties without fear or favor. Let fines do what they do best. Hurt just enough to teach. Who knows, those same fines might one day fund the traffic lights we keep praying for.

But beyond enforcement, there is personal responsibility. Plan your journeys. Avoid peak hours if you can. Use navigation tools like Google Maps to find alternative routes. And most importantly, accept one simple truth, everyone on the road has somewhere to be. You are not the only one with urgency.

Kampala's roads do not need superheroes. They need humility. Because at the end of the day, no one sets out hoping to sleep in traffic. Yet every day, we do exactly what guarantees it.

So the next time you feel the urge to become a one day VIP, overtake on the wrong side, or chase an ambulance like it's a free ticket to heaven, just remember that traffic has a way of humbling everyone. Eventually.

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