Drivers demand slash of EPS fines by half

BY JAMES OWICH

GULU. Drivers in northern Uganda have called on officials from the Ministry of Works and Transport to reduce the proposed fines under the Express Penalty Scheme (EPS) by 50 percent, arguing that the current rates are excessively high and unaffordable for many.

The drivers contend that a reduction would make the penalties more realistic, adding that most of them are low-income earners supporting large families.

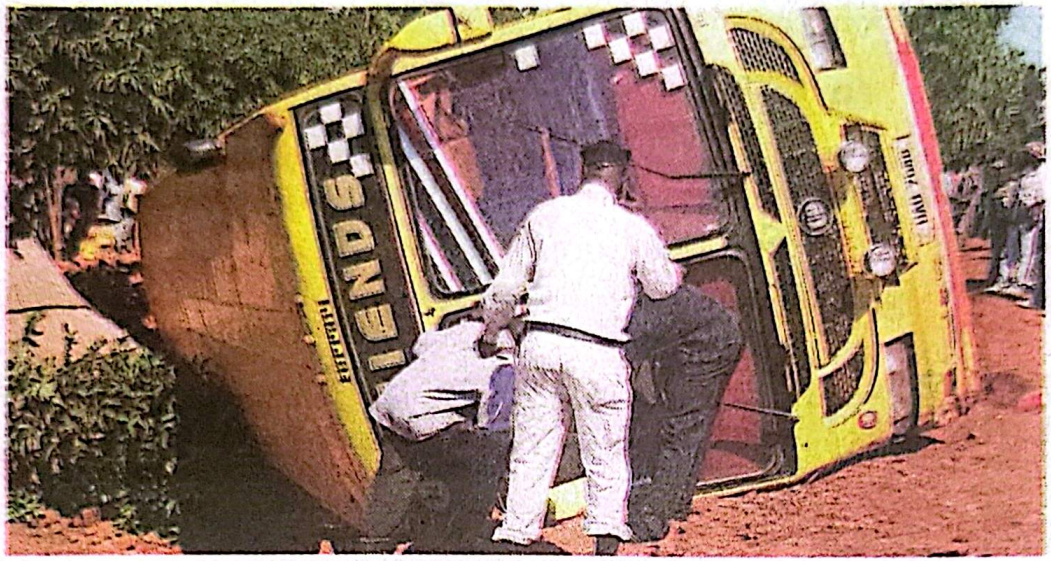
Under the now-suspended EPS, a motorist who runs a red light or exceeds the speed limit faces a fine of 10 currency points, equivalent to Shs200,000.

The scheme was temporarily halted following widespread public outcry, prompting the ministry to embark on nationwide consultative meetings.

These engagements are intended to gather public views that will inform a revised proposal to be presented to Cabinet before being tabled in Parliament for possible amendments.

Mr Silver Okori, a former driver at the Uganda National Roads Authority, described the Shs200,000 fine as prohibitive for the average driver.

He explained that, in many cases, drivers are compelled to speed due to pressure from passengers, particularly businesspeople who demand quicker journeys.



A traffic officer at an accident scene at Custom Corner in Bar-Dege-Layibi in Gulu City on Atiak-Juba Highway in 2016. PHOTO/JAMES OWICH

"Sometimes we drive faster because we fear losing our jobs due to complaints from passengers," he said. "If you drive slowly, especially in buses, passengers avoid you, and that affects your ability to make a profitable return trip."

Mr Gody Odong, a taxi driver operating from Gulu Main Taxi Park in Gulu City, echoed similar concerns, questioning the intent behind the proposed fines. He suggested that a more reasonable penalty would be around Shs50,000.

"This fine is too high. If I am asked to pay Shs200,000, I may simply run away," he said, adding that the proposed 50 percent surcharge should also be reduced to at least 10 percent.

However, road safety experts argue that stricter penalties are necessary to curb indiscipline on Uganda's roads. Mr Prosper Mubangizi, a road safety consultant, said speeding remains a leading cause of road crashes, many of which result in fatalities.

"We have seen a surge in road accidents due to speeding," he said. "A significant number of victims are pedestrians, and nearly 40 percent of crashes involve vehicles that are out of control. This contributes to Uganda having some of the most dangerous roads in the world."

He further observed that pedestrians struck by vehicles travelling at speeds as low as 40 kilometres per hour often have little chance of survival.

Mr Robert Kisakye, a policy and legal analyst at the ministry, assured the public that their views would be taken into account before the proposal is finalised.

He emphasised the government's intention to introduce measures that are both effective and publicly acceptable.

"We do not want to introduce something that the public will reject," he said.

He also warned that repeat offenders risk having their driving licences suspended for up to 24 months under the revised regulations. The 2025 annual police crime report indicates that Uganda recorded 5,383 road traffic deaths in 2025 compared to 5,144 in 2024, representing a 4.7 percent increase.

Motorcyclists and their passengers account for more than 50 percent of the fatalities. Serious injuries also increased by 8.4 percent from 17,013 in 2024 to 18,444 in 2025, and minor injuries increased by 0.5 percent from 3,651 in 2024 to 3,668 in 2025.

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