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Inside: What it means to be a motorist in 2026

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MESSAGE FROM THE GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR



Welcome, esteemed readers, to the second edition of AutoNews Magazine for 2026.

The motoring landscape is continuously evolving. Economic shifts, vehicle technologies, changing consumer preferences, and a focus on road safety are redefining what it means to be a motorist today.

This Q2 magazine titled 'The New Motoring Reality in Kenya' reflects this transformation and challenges us to embrace a future where resilience, innovation, and responsible mobility are more important than ever.

What Does It Mean to Be a Motorist in 2026?

In 2026, mobility is no longer just about getting from one place to another. It is about embracing a smarter, safer, and more connected way of life.

In Kenya, we operate in an environment dominated by rapid urbanization and a large ecosystem of transport networks, including the boda-boda sector and the emerging green EV Shift. These shifts present both challenges and opportunities for mobility.

Being a motorist in 2026 means being informed, adaptable, and mindful.

It means prioritizing road safety, respecting fellow road users, and recognizing that every decision behind the wheel contributes to the well-being of our communities. It also means embracing innovation from advanced driver assistance systems to electric mobility and digital services that make travel more efficient and environmentally responsible.

Our commitment

Data has become one of the most valuable assets in our country. As an organization, we remain committed to supporting motorists through these changes. We continue to invest in innovation, deliver trusted services, and advocate for safer roads with a more sustainable future. Our goal is not only to meet the needs of today's drivers but also to help shape the future of mobility.

In our sphere, we have adopted a culture of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting mobility data. This has consistently enabled us to deliver personalized services to you, improve road safety outcomes, support fleet management, and provide valuable insights to governments, insurers, transport operators, and urban planners, among others.

Alumni Platform

One of the milestones we are particularly proud of this quarter is our Alumni Platform- a vibrant network designed to reconnect individuals who have been part of our journey over the years while creating new opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and lifelong engagement.

We recognize that every graduate, participant, partner, and former colleague remains an important ambassador of our mission, carrying forward the values, knowledge, and experiences gained through their association with us.

We encourage you to join us for more information on Mobility updates at: <https://alumni.aakenya.co.ke/>

Insider's eye of the Edition

Within the pages you will discover:

- The latest NTSA Regulations on Vehicles, what this means for you as a motorist and industry stakeholders.
- The heart of the engineering for spark plugs and gearbox maintenance
- The effect of global economic shift on the mobility industry
- The 2nd edition of Road Safety Excellence Awards

In conclusion, the new motoring reality calls for more informed decisions, greater resilience, and a shared commitment to responsible mobility.

Together, government, industry, communities, and motorists can build a transport ecosystem that is safer, smarter, more sustainable, and more inclusive.

As we embrace this new era, let us remember that the future of motoring is not defined simply by the vehicles we drive, but by the values we uphold every time we take to the road.

Happy Reading.

Francis Theuri,
Group Managing Director, AA Kenya.

Table of Content



Page 4



Page 18



Page 34

Contents

Table of Content	2
In the News	
AA Kenya Road Safety Awards Returns for 2nd Edition	4
NTSA introduces digital vehicle logbooks	6
First Aid Corner	
First Safety and Emergency Response	7
Motor News	
Why Kenya is temporarily backtracking on clean fuel standards	8
Road Safety	
AA Best Driver Challenge 2026	12
Motor News	
TATA Motors launches comprehensive vehicle line-up for Africa	15
Motoring Hacks	
Why proper gearbox care matters	20
How to avoid predatory car loans	25
Sparkplugs explained	28
Road Safety	
The country's most dangerous time to drive	32
Events	
Concours D'elegance'	34
Road Safety	
NTSA's new instant fines system	36
Opinion: How much longer before implementation of the National Road Safety Action Plan	40
Motor News	
Rising trend of vehicle exterior parts theft	43

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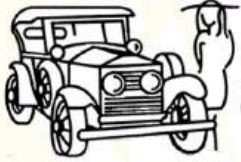
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AA Road Safety Excellence Awards Returns for Second Edition

By Timothy Albrite



Following the success of its inaugural edition, the AA Road Safety Excellence Awards is set to return for a second year, shining a spotlight on the individuals, organisations and institutions making a measurable impact on road safety in Kenya.

Organised by AA Kenya with support from the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and key road safety stakeholders, the awards gala has quickly established itself as one of the country's most important platforms for recognising excellence in road safety advocacy, innovation, training, enforcement and community engagement.

The initiative was launched to celebrate those working behind the scenes to reduce crashes, improve road user behaviour and create safer mobility systems. At a time when road traffic crashes continue to claim thousands of lives annually, the awards seek to highlight practical solutions and inspire wider adoption of road safety best practices across the country.

The inaugural event, held in Nairobi in 2025, brought together government officials, road safety advocates, private sector leaders, transport operators, insurers, educational institutions and grassroots organisations committed to improving safety on Kenyan roads.

The event recognised outstanding achievements across a broad range of categories reflecting the diverse nature of road safety interventions.

Among the categories honoured were Driver Safety & Wellness, Road Safety Innovation, Policy & Compliance, Community Engagement, Insurance Company of

the Year, Motor Financier of the Year, EV Adoption Champion, Learning Institution of the Year, Digital Taxi Operator of the Year, Matatu SACCO of the Year and Boda Boda SACCO of the Year.

Special recognition was also accorded to Road Safety Champions and Traffic Base Commanders who demonstrated exceptional commitment to saving lives on Kenya's roads.

Notable winners from the inaugural edition included Sikika Road Safety, Isuzu Drivers Academy, GA Insurance, Kenya Red Cross, Royal Media Services, SPIRO, Moja EV, Loxea and several transport sector stakeholders whose initiatives have contributed to safer roads and improved mobility outcomes.

As preparations gather pace for the second edition, expectations are high that even more organisations will submit entries showcasing innovative road safety programmes, employee wellness initiatives, driver training interventions, technology solutions and community-based campaigns.

The awards continue to align with Kenya's National Road Safety Action Plan and the broader objectives of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety, which seeks to significantly reduce road traffic fatalities and injuries worldwide.

Beyond recognising achievement, the awards serve as a platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration. By showcasing successful initiatives, AA Kenya hopes to encourage organisations across both the public and private sectors to strengthen their commitment to road

safety and adopt evidence-based approaches that save lives.

AA Kenya Managing Director Francis Theuri noted during the inaugural ceremony that behind every road safety statistic are stories of impact, innovation and commitment that deserve recognition. The awards were created not only to celebrate those efforts but also to foster a stronger culture of road safety across the country.

As Kenya continues to grapple with the social and economic cost of road crashes, the upcoming AA Road Safety Excellence Awards will once again provide an opportunity to honour the champions making a difference while encouraging

Road Safety Excellence Awards 2025 : Pictorial



NTSA INTRODUCES DIGITAL VEHICLE LOGBOOKS (ELOGBOOK)

IN MAJOR TRANSPORT SERVICES OVERHAUL



Kenya is going paperless. The eLogbook will replace paper vehicle logbooks, integrating all motor vehicle registration processes into a secure digital platform.

- New Vehicle Registration
- Transfer of Ownership
- Inspection Services
- Change of Vehicle Particulars



By Alex Munene

Kenya is set to phase out paper vehicle logbooks and replace them with a fully digital system as the government accelerates efforts to modernise transport administration and reduce service delays.

In a public notice, the National Transport and Safety Authority announced the rollout of the Electronic Motor Vehicle Registration Certificate, commonly referred to as the eLogbook. The new platform will officially go live on June 10, 2026.

The move marks one of the most significant reforms in Kenya's vehicle registration ecosystem in recent years, placing the country alongside a growing number of nations adopting paperless transport administration systems.

According to the Authority, the eLogbook will integrate with all motor vehicle registration processes, including new vehicle registration, transfer of ownership, inspection services, and changes of vehicle particulars. Vehicle owners will access, download, and verify their digital logbooks through their eCitizen accounts.

The transition forms part of a broader government digitalisation agenda aimed at improving efficiency, enhancing transparency and reducing physical interaction in public service delivery.

For motorists, dealers, insurers and financiers, the shift promises faster transaction turnaround times and easier document access. NTSA says the digital platform will significantly cut administrative delays that currently see some registration-related services take days or even weeks to complete.

The Authority also expects the eLogbook to strengthen document security by reducing cases of forgery, loss and tampering that have historically affected paper-based ownership records.

In Kenya's automotive sector, vehicle logbooks remain critical documents used in financing, insurance underwriting, vehicle transfers and ownership verification. Digitising the system could therefore

reshape how multiple industries interact with vehicle ownership data.

Financial institutions and insurance companies are among the key stakeholders expected to benefit from real-time access to verified ownership records. The Authority says improved data management will also support traffic enforcement, insurance verification and road safety initiatives.

The reforms could further reduce opportunities for corruption by minimising physical visits to NTSA offices and automating previously manual processes.

The announcement comes at a time when Kenya continues to invest heavily in digital public infrastructure through platforms such as eCitizen, which already hosts a wide range of government services.

To prepare stakeholders for the transition, NTSA has scheduled a series of virtual sensitisation and training sessions targeting vehicle assemblers, dealers, financial institutions, insurers, driving schools, PSV operators, SACCOs, county governments and members of the public.

The sessions began on May 25, 2026, with separate stakeholder categories assigned different training dates and times. Public sensitisation forums took place between June 2 and June 4.

For Kenya's rapidly evolving automotive landscape, the introduction of the eLogbook signals more than just a technological upgrade. It reflects a wider shift toward connected, data-driven transport services designed to improve convenience, accountability and operational efficiency.

If successfully implemented, the system could transform vehicle ownership administration in Kenya and set a new benchmark for transport digitalisation within the East African region.

FIRE SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE: Your Role as a First Responder



A road crash involving fire is a critical emergency. When seconds count, your actions can prevent further tragedy. This month, we focus on the essential steps for maintaining scene safety and ensuring you know how to call for professional help.

Scene Safety: Your First Priority

If you encounter a vehicle crash where fire or smoke is present, your safety comes first. **Do not become a second victim.**

- **Assess and Distance:** If a vehicle is smoking or on fire, park your car at a safe distance and alert others to stay back.

- **Equip Your Vehicle:** Carrying a functional, serviced fire extinguisher in your car is essential. It is one of the most effective tools for preventing a small engine fire from becoming a catastrophe.

- **Stay Clear:** If the fire is already large or fuel is leaking, do not attempt to intervene. Keep yourself and bystanders away from the area until professional firefighters arrive.

- **Fuel Awareness:** Be vigilant. Fuel leaks can occur in any crash. Avoid using matches, lighters, or any potential ignition sources near the scene.

Know Your Emergency Numbers

If you witness a crash or fire, you need to alert emergency services immediately. In Kenya, you can dial any of the following toll-free numbers to reach the National Police Service:

999 | 112 | 911

When you call:

1. Stay calm.

2. Give the exact location (use landmarks or road signs).

3. Describe the situation (e.g., "There is a vehicle fire with potential injuries").

4. Do not hang up until the dispatcher tells you to.

Take Action: Get Trained

Reading about emergency response is important, but it is no substitute for practical, hands-on training. In a high-pressure situation, muscle memory and confidence gained through certified training are what save lives.

We strongly encourage every driver and road user to enroll in a recognized First Aid and Fire Safety course. This training will teach you how to properly handle fire extinguishers and manage trauma scenes effectively.

- **For Roadside Emergencies: Call AA Kenya Roadside Assistance at 0709 933 000 or 0709 933 999.**

- **For First Aid Training &**

- **Practical Tips: Call The Quick Fix Learning Hub at 0707 079 192.**

Remember: Professional medical help is the ultimate goal. By securing the scene and alerting authorities quickly using the numbers above, you provide the critical link that allows paramedics to do their jobs effectively.



The Sulphur Surge: Why Kenya is Temporarily Backtracking on Clean Fuel Standards

By Timothy Albrite

For the past decade, Kenya has been a regional leader in the push for “green” fuel. However, in a move that has caught the automotive industry off guard, the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry recently hit the brakes on progress. Effective **April 30, 2026**, Kenya officially relaxed its sulphur content limits for petrol and diesel, raising the maximum allowable threshold from **10 parts per million (ppm)** back to **50 ppm**.

This six-month emergency window marks a rare moment where environmental and engine-health goals have been sidelined by the cold reality of global logistics.

The “Why”: A Crisis of Supply

The decision wasn’t born out of a desire for lower quality, but out of necessity. According to government briefings, the ongoing disruptions in the Middle East, Kenya’s primary source of refined petroleum, have made sourcing the ultra-low sulphur (10 ppm) fuel increasingly difficult and expensive.

To prevent the dry pumps and skyrocketing prices that a shortage would trigger, the government invoked a temporary stay on the stricter **KS EAS 158:2025 and KS EAS 177:2025** standards. By allowing 50 ppm fuel, Kenya can tap into a wider pool of global supply, ensuring the country remains mobile while the geopolitical dust settles.

A Brief History of Kenya’s Fuel Evolution

To understand why this is a “backtrack,” one must look at how far the country has come:

- **The Lead Era:** Prior to 2005, leaded petrol was the norm. Kenya successfully phased this out in early 2006.
- **The 500 ppm Standard:** For years, diesel in Kenya

contained up to 500 ppm of sulphur, which was notorious for the thick black smoke emitted by trucks and buses.

- **The 2015 Shift:** On January 1, 2015, Kenya (alongside its EAC neighbours) made a massive leap, mandating a 50 ppm limit. This was a turning point for modern diesel engines (Common Rail) entering the market.

- **The 10 ppm Goal:** By 2023–2024, the goal was set to transition to 10 ppm, aligning Kenya with Euro 5 and Euro 6 emission standards.

Potential Effects: What This Means for Your Car

While 50 ppm is still “Low Sulphur” by global historical standards, the jump from 10 ppm back to 50 ppm isn’t without consequence, particularly for high-end, late-model vehicles.

1. **Emissions Control Systems:** Modern vehicles equipped with Diesel Particulate Filters (DPF) and sophisticated catalytic converters are designed for 10 ppm fuel. Higher sulphur can lead to “poisoning” of these components, potentially causing premature clogging and expensive repairs.

2. **Oil Acidification:** Sulphur produces sulphuric acid during combustion. Moving back to 50 ppm means engine oil may degrade slightly faster. Owners of Euro 6-compliant cars may want to consider shortening their oil change intervals during this six-month period.

3. **Environmental Impact:** Higher sulphur leads to higher particulate matter (soot) and sulphur dioxide emissions, momentarily stalling Kenya’s progress in improving urban air quality.

The Verdict

This policy is a classic case of “pragmatism over perfection.” For the average motorist driving a five-to-ten-year-old vehicle, the difference between 10 ppm and 50 ppm will be largely unnoticeable. However, for the fleet manager or the owner of a brand-new European import, it is a reminder that even the most advanced machines are at the mercy of global supply chains.

The clock is now ticking. In late October 2026, the industry expects a return to the 10 ppm gold standard provided the global tide turns in Kenya’s favour.

SIDEBAR 1: The Chemistry of Combustion

For older engines, the difference between 10 ppm and 50 ppm is negligible. However, for vehicles built to Euro 6 standards or higher, sulphur is a chemical “poison.” Here is how it affects your car:

- **DPF Clogging:** Diesel Particulate Filters (DPF) trap soot. High sulphur increases the volume of particulate matter, forcing the DPF to “regenerate” (burn off soot) more frequently. Over time, this can shorten the filter’s lifespan, a component that costs hundreds of thousands of shillings to replace.

- **Catalytic Converter Efficiency:** In petrol engines, sulphur coats the precious metals (platinum/palladium) in the catalytic converter. This reduces its ability to convert toxic gases into harmless nitrogen and oxygen, leading to higher emissions and potential “Check Engine” lights.

- **Acidic Wear:** Sulphur reacts with water vapor during combustion to form sulphuric acid. This acid can etch cylinder walls and contaminate engine oil. If you are driving a high-performance vehicle during this 50 ppm window, **shortening your oil change interval by 20%** is a cheap insurance policy.

SIDEBAR 2: The Global Sulphur Map

How Kenya’s “Relaxed” Standard Compares Internationally

While 50 ppm feels like a step back for Kenya, it remains relatively “clean” when viewed against the diverse standards of the African continent and the developing world.

Region/Country	Current Sulphur Limit (Diesel)	Context
European Union	10 ppm	The global “Gold Standard” (Euro 6).
USA / Canada	15 ppm	Known as Ultra-Low Sulfur Diesel (ULSD).
Japan / South Korea	10 ppm	Aggressive targets for urban air quality.
China	10 ppm	China VI standards now match European levels.
India	10 ppm	Transitioned nationwide to BS-VI in 2020.
Morocco	10 ppm	The leader in North Africa for fuel quality.
Kenya (Current)	50 ppm	Temporarily up from 10 ppm due to supply crisis.
South Africa	10 ppm & 50 ppm	Most urban pumps offer 10 ppm; 50 ppm is the baseline.
Nigeria	Nigeria 50 ppm - 200 ppm	Recently tightened from 3,000 ppm, but enforcement varies.
Many West/Central African Nations	500 ppm - 2,000 ppm	High-sulphur fuel remains a major health hurdle in these regions.



The Takeaway:

Kenya's temporary 50 ppm limit still keeps it ahead of many neighbouring markets, which often struggle with fuel as dirty as 500 ppm or higher. However, it puts the country at a brief disadvantage compared to Morocco and Europe, who remain committed to the 10 ppm limit regardless of market volatility.

SIDEBAR 3: Pro-Tips for Motorists

How to Shield Your Engine During the 50 ppm Window

While the government ensures supply, the responsibility for long-term engine health shifts to you. Experts suggest a few tactical changes to your maintenance routine over the next six months.

- **Shorten Service Intervals:** High-sulphur fuel creates acidic byproducts during combustion that degrade engine oil faster. Consider reducing your oil change interval by roughly **20–25%** (e.g., if you usually service at 10,000 km, move it up to 7,500 km or 8,000 km).

- **Prioritize High-TBN Oils:** When selecting engine oil, look for those with a high **Total Base Number (TBN)**. These oils contain more alkaline additives specifically designed to neutralize the sulphuric acid generated by higher-sulphur fuels.

- **Fuel Filter Vigilance:** Sulphur can contribute to increased deposit formation. Inspect and replace your fuel filters more frequently to prevent injector clogging and maintain optimal fuel pressure.

- **Use Quality Additives:** For modern diesel engines, consider using multi-functional additives like **Liqui Moly Super Diesel Additive** or **Wynn's Diesel Injector Cleaner**. These help maintain injector spray patterns and can improve cetane ratings for a cleaner burn.

- **The "Italian Tune-up":** To prevent your **Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF)** from clogging due to increased soot, ensure you take at least one sustained 30-minute highway drive per week. This allows the exhaust to reach temperatures high enough to trigger "passive regeneration" and burn off trapped particulates.

- **Avoid "Reserve" Driving:** Keep your tank at least a quarter full. Running on "E" increases the chances of the fuel pump sucking in settled sediments or contaminants that are more prevalent in lower-grade batches.

These expert guides provide deeper insight into how additives and maintenance routines can counteract the effects of higher sulphur fuel:





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AA Kenya Best Driver Challenge Builds Momentum as Drivers Eye National and Continental Success

By Daniel Kiprono



The 2026 AA Kenya Best Driver Challenge is gathering momentum as drivers from across the country compete for a chance to prove they are among Kenya's safest and most skilled motorists.

Having already completed regional qualifiers in Eldoret and Mombasa, the competition now heads into its next regions as participants continue their journey towards the National Finals and the opportunity to represent Kenya on the continental stage.

Organised by AA Kenya in partnership with the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), the Best Driver Challenge has become one of the country's leading road safety initiatives. The competition seeks to identify drivers who demonstrate not only exceptional vehicle handling skills but also a strong understanding of road safety, traffic regulations and responsible

driving practices.

This year's challenge features three categories: Best Young Driver, Ladies Only and The Masters category, providing motorists from different demographics with an opportunity to test their abilities in a structured and competitive environment.

The regional contests began in Eldoret, where participants took part in a series of practical and theoretical assessments designed to evaluate their knowledge, precision and overall driving competence. The challenge then moved to Mombasa, attracting another group of motorists eager to secure a place in the next round of the competition.

Unlike conventional driving contests that focus primarily on speed or vehicle performance, the Best

Driver Challenge places road safety at the centre of the competition. Participants are assessed on a range of skills including vehicle control, manoeuvring, hazard perception, traffic rules, road signs and first aid knowledge.

The competition reflects AA Kenya's ongoing commitment to improving road safety standards by encouraging motorists to adopt safer driving habits and develop a deeper understanding of their responsibilities behind the wheel.



The journey is far from over. Following the regional rounds, the challenge will move to Nakuru before concluding the qualification stage in Nairobi.

The best performers from across the country will then advance to the National Finals, where Kenya's top drivers will compete for national honours.

For participants in the Best Young Driver category, the stakes extend beyond the national title. Winners will earn the opportunity to represent Kenya at the African Best Young Driver Contest, which is scheduled to take place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, later this year.

The continental competition brings together outstanding young drivers from across Africa, providing a platform to showcase driving excellence, road safety awareness and technical competence on an international stage. Competitors are tested on a combination of practical driving skills, road safety knowledge and emergency response capabilities, reflecting the FIA's broader objective of promoting safer roads across the continent.

As the Best Driver Challenge progresses towards its decisive stages, the competition continues to demonstrate that excellence behind the wheel is about far more than driving ability alone.

It is about discipline, awareness, responsibility and a commitment to making roads safer for all users.

With the National Finals drawing closer and continental honours on the horizon, the race to identify Kenya's best drivers is only just heating up.

To sign up for the competition, register at www.bestdriver.aakenya.co.ke



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A NEW TREND OF ALL-TERRAIN



Tata Motors Launches Comprehensive Commercial Vehicle Lineup for Africa

By Timothy Albrite



Tata Motors, one of the world's leading commercial vehicle manufacturers, has unveiled its most extensive portfolio yet for the African market in Cape Town, South Africa. The showcase, attended by AutoNews, included 11 vehicles across multiple categories and powertrains, signalling the company's intention to strengthen its footprint in Kenya and the wider East African region with next-generation technology and solutions tailored for local needs.

A Portfolio Designed for Africa's Diverse Mobility Challenges

At the heart of Tata's new lineup is a commitment to flexibility and efficiency. The range highlights platforms for every segment, from urban delivery to heavy-duty construction, reflecting Tata's understanding of the local business landscape and transport infrastructure.

The Prima range, Tata's flagship heavy-duty truck, targets long-distance freight and construction, with the new Prima E28.K electric tipper delivering high torque and zero emissions for mining and construction operations.

The Azura 1918, part of Tata's next-generation intermediate and light-duty trucks, is engineered for regional and urban haulage, offering higher productivity, strong uptime, and improved driver comfort.

The compact Intra V30 and V70 pickups, featuring crash-tested walkthrough cabins for fatigue-free driving, are built for last-mile delivery and the challenges of Kenya's crowded cities. The V30 offers a 1,300kg payload, while the V70 caters to more demanding applications with a 1,950kg payload and a 10-foot load body designed to maximize earnings for SMEs and courier firms.

Electric Vehicles Take Center Stage

Tata is also turning heads in Africa's emerging electric vehicle space. The company's new electric lineup spans several segments: the Ace Pro EV, a zero-emission electric mini truck built for efficient last-mile deliveries; the Intra EV, a high-payload electric pickup designed for demanding urban cargo with extended range; and the

Ultra E.9, a light electric truck engineered for clean and quiet intra-city logistics, offering high manoeuvrability and reliable performance.

The Prima E28.K tipper brings robust electric power to mining and construction, with superior endurance and faster turnaround cycles.

"Our electric vehicles are built to help operators boost uptime and lower ownership costs, even in the most diverse applications," said Asif Shamim, Head of International Business at Tata Motors Ltd. With governments pushing for cleaner mobility and businesses seeking relief from volatile fuel prices, electric trucks and buses could soon become the fleet choice for urban delivery, airport logistics, and mining operations. Still, widespread adoption will depend on the growth of charging networks, accessible financing, and robust after-sales support.

Buses Built for Urban and Regional Growth

Buses remain central to East Africa's transport sector, and Tata's new models bring a variety of options: the Ultra Prime RE, a rear-engine intra-city bus designed for comfortable, efficient urban operations; the LPO 1618 Magna, a fully built 44-seater AC bus for staff and intercity travel; the LP 909, a compact midi bus ideal for school and staff transport; and the LPO 1623 Nova, a premium 49-seater AC bus for longer intercity routes, all engineered for comfort, reliability, and operational efficiency. As urbanization and commuter demand rise, operators are seeking durable, easy-to-maintain vehicles that can keep up with the pace of modern African cities.

A Focus on Customer Support and Local Investment

Tata Motors' presence in Sub-Saharan Africa now spans 29 countries, supported by a network of over 320 service centres and seven assembly operations, including a facility in Kenya. The company emphasizes not just sales, but also after-sales service, spare parts availability, and comprehensive annual maintenance contracts, aiming to provide peace of mind for

operators and fleet owners.

Regional partnerships with firms such as Tata International, Panafrique Motors, KOMCO Motors, and Allied Motors further extend Tata's reach and ability to respond to local market demands. With more than 340,000 commercial vehicles sold in Africa and over 60 available models, the company is betting on long-term relationships and investment in local skills and employment.

Driving Forward: Mobility Solutions for Africa's Growth

As Tata Motors continues to expand its portfolio and adapt to changing market needs, the company positions itself not just as a supplier, but as a partner in Africa's economic growth. With advanced R&D, a variety of powertrain options, and a strong focus on customer support, Tata's latest launches set a new benchmark for commercial mobility in Kenya and across East Africa.





A Closer Look at Tata's New Lineup of Commercial Vehicles.

By Timothy Albrite

In a landmark launch event in Cape Town, Tata Motors showcased a diverse fleet of 11 new commercial vehicles for Africa, targeting everything from urban delivery to heavy-duty construction. The portfolio, designed to meet the continent's varied mobility needs, includes cutting-edge electric models and reliable diesel workhorses. Here's a closer look at each vehicle and what it brings to the African market.

1. Prima E28.K Electric Tipper

Leading the charge into sustainable construction and mining, the Prima E28.K is Africa's first electric tipper from Tata Motors. Designed for demanding off-road applications, this vehicle offers high torque and zero emissions, enabling operators to meet environmental regulations without sacrificing performance. Its robust build and rapid turnaround make it ideal for mining and infrastructure projects.

2. Prima FL 2528.K

A heavy-duty diesel tipper, the Prima FL 2528.K is engineered for rugged environments. With a powerful engine, reinforced chassis, and advanced safety features, it's a proven performer in construction, mining, and haulage. Operators benefit from reliability and low maintenance, making it a staple across tough terrains.

3. Azura 1918



The Azura 1918 is Tata's answer to the needs of regional and urban logistics. This intermediate and light-duty truck boasts improved productivity and uptime. Enhanced driver comfort, versatile load options, and fuel efficiency make it a popular choice for businesses requiring frequent, short-haul deliveries.

4. Ultra E.9 Electric Truck



Expanding Tata's electric offerings, the Ultra E.9 is a light-duty truck built for clean, quiet intra-city logistics. Its maneuverability and range are tailored for Africa's growing urban centers, providing operators with sustainable solutions and lower operating costs.

5. Ultra Prime RE Bus

Catering to urban passenger mobility, the Ultra Prime RE is a rear-engine intra-city bus. Featuring a modern design, comfortable seating, and efficient drivetrains, it's built for reliability in congested city environments.

This model is expected to ease commuter congestion and support Africa's expanding urban transit networks.

6. LPO 1618 Magna Bus

The LPO 1618 Magna offers a fully built, air-conditioned 44-seater configuration. Designed for intercity travel and staff transportation, it provides a balance of comfort, durability, and operational efficiency. It's ideal for companies and public transport operators seeking dependable medium-distance solutions.

7. LP 909 Midi Bus



A compact bus, the LP 909 is suitable for school and staff transport. Its smaller footprint allows easy navigation through narrow city streets, while safety features and comfort ensure peace of mind for operators and passengers.



8. LPO 1623 Nova Bus

For premium, long-haul travel, Tata introduces the LPO 1623 Nova—a 49-seater, air-conditioned bus. With an emphasis on passenger comfort and reliability, this vehicle is poised to become a favourite for regional and cross-border routes.



9. Intra V30 Pickup

The Intra V30 is a compact pickup designed for last-mile delivery. It features a crash-tested, walkthrough cabin for driver comfort and safety, and a 1,300kg payload that's perfect for SMEs and urban couriers. Its versatility and efficiency make it a go-to for city logistics.

10. Intra V70 Pickup

Building on the V30's strengths, the Intra V70 offers a larger 1,950kg payload and a 10-foot load body. It's suited for heavier urban and regional deliveries, maximizing earning potential for traders and logistics firms.



11. Ace Pro EV Mini Truck

The Ace Pro EV is Tata's zero-emission mini truck, purpose-built for last-mile deliveries. With a compact design, high payload, and extended range, it's ideal for urban environments and businesses looking to decarbonize their fleets.

A Strategy for Africa's Growth

From electrified trucks and buses that answer sustainability challenges, to rugged diesel models that tackle the continent's toughest jobs, the lineup is backed by extensive after-sales support, regional partnerships, and assembly facilities.

"Our goal is to empower African businesses with the right vehicle for every job," says Asif Shamim, Head of International Business at Tata Motors Ltd. "Whether it's sustainable urban mobility or heavy-duty construction, each model is engineered for Africa's unique demands."



With over 340,000 commercial vehicles sold in Africa and a network spanning 29 countries, Tata Motors is solidifying its position as a partner in the continent's economic development, one vehicle at a time

Your Gearbox Could Cost More Than Your Engine: Why Proper Transmission Care Matters

By Nderitu James

Few things strike fear into a motorist's heart like the words: "Your gearbox needs replacement."

Unlike routine maintenance items such as tyres, brake pads or engine oil, a gearbox is one of the most expensive components in a vehicle. Depending on the model, repairs can run into hundreds of thousands of shillings, while a complete replacement can cost even more.

Yet many gearbox failures are preventable. The problem is that unlike engines, which often give obvious warning signs when something is wrong, transmissions tend to fail quietly. By the time the symptoms become severe, the damage is usually already done.

And nowhere is this more common than with the increasingly popular Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT).

Understanding the Gearbox's Role

The gearbox is responsible for transferring power from the engine to the wheels while ensuring the engine operates within its most efficient speed range.

Whether you drive a conventional automatic, manual, dual-clutch transmission (DCT) or CVT, the gearbox works constantly whenever the vehicle is moving.

Every acceleration, hill climb, traffic jam and overtaking manoeuvre places demands on the transmission.

Proper maintenance is therefore not optional but essential.

Why Modern Gearboxes Are More Sensitive Than Ever

Today's transmissions are far more complex than those found in vehicles from two decades ago.

Manufacturers have focused heavily on fuel efficiency and emissions reduction. As a result, modern gearboxes rely on sophisticated hydraulic systems, electronic control modules, sensors and precisely formulated transmission fluids.

A gearbox that is neglected, overheated or operated with contaminated fluid can deteriorate surprisingly quickly.

Unfortunately, many motorists still believe outdated myths such as:

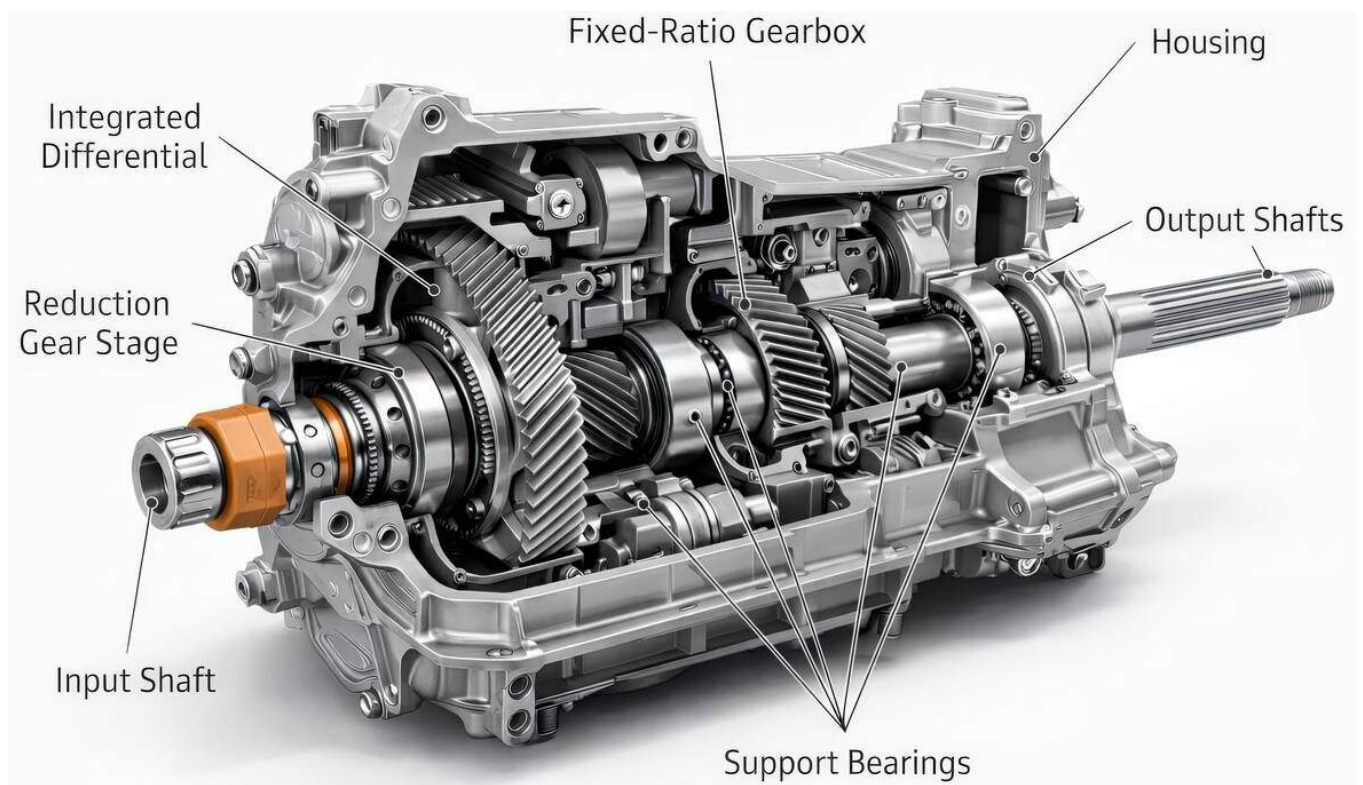
- Automatic transmissions have "lifetime" fluid.
- Gearbox oil never needs changing.
- Any transmission fluid will do.
- Minor gearbox jerks are normal.

In reality, these assumptions can lead to catastrophic failures.

The Rise of the CVT

Over the last decade, CVT transmissions have become increasingly common in the Kenyan market, particularly in imported vehicles from Japan.

Models such as the Nissan X-Trail, Nissan Note, Nissan





Levorg have helped make CVTs a familiar feature on Kenyan roads.

Unlike traditional automatics that shift between fixed gears, a CVT uses a belt or chain running between variable-diameter pulleys.

Instead of moving from first gear to second gear and so on, the system continuously adjusts ratios to keep the engine operating at its most efficient speed.

The benefits are clear:

- Better fuel economy
- Smooth acceleration
- Reduced engine strain
- Lower emissions

However, these advantages come with stricter maintenance requirements.

Why CVTs Have Earned a Bad Reputation

Ask mechanics about failed gearboxes and CVTs often dominate the conversation.

The transmission itself is not necessarily flawed. The problem is that many owners unknowingly neglect them.

Several factors contribute to premature CVT failure:

Ignoring Fluid Changes

CVT fluid is not ordinary automatic transmission fluid.

It performs multiple critical functions, including lubrication, cooling and transmitting hydraulic pressure throughout the transmission.

Over time, heat degrades the fluid and reduces its protective properties. Once the fluid deteriorates, wear accelerates rapidly. Many manufacturers recommend inspections at regular intervals, while replacement schedules vary depending on driving conditions. Severe operating environments such as heavy traffic, towing or frequent hill climbing often require more frequent fluid changes.

Using the Wrong Fluid

This is one of the quickest ways to destroy a CVT.

Each manufacturer specifies particular fluid formulations designed for its transmission.

Using generic fluid or the wrong specification can affect pulley operation, belt grip and hydraulic pressure.

A short-term saving at the service bay can lead to a long-term financial disaster.

Excessive Heat

Heat is the enemy of every transmission.

CVTs are particularly sensitive to high operating temperatures.

Frequent stop-and-go traffic, carrying heavy loads, aggressive acceleration and neglected cooling systems can all increase transmission temperatures.

Overheating accelerates fluid breakdown and internal wear.

Delayed Maintenance

Many imported vehicles arrive in Kenya with uncertain service histories.

A vehicle showing 80,000 kilometres on the odometer may have covered significantly more distance before export.

Assuming maintenance is up to date simply because the vehicle appears clean can be an expensive mistake.

Warning Signs Your Gearbox Needs Attention

Gearboxes rarely fail overnight.

Most provide warning signs long before major damage occurs.

Pay attention if you notice:

Delayed Engagement

The vehicle hesitates before moving after selecting Drive or Reverse.

Shuddering During Acceleration

A vibration or judder when pulling away may indicate internal wear or fluid issues.

Unusual Noises

Whining, humming or grinding sounds should never be ignored.

Rising Engine Revs Without Acceleration

The engine speed increases but vehicle speed does not increase proportionally.

Dashboard Warning Lights

Modern vehicles monitor transmission performance electronically. Any transmission warning should be investigated promptly.

Burning Smell

Overheated transmission fluid often produces a distinctive burnt odour.

Habits That Help Your Gearbox Last Longer

Good driving habits can dramatically extend transmission life.

Warm Up Gently

Modern vehicles do not need lengthy warm-ups, but driving gently during the first few kilometres allows fluids to reach operating temperature.

Come to a Complete Stop Before Changing Direction

Never shift from Reverse to Drive or Drive to Reverse while the vehicle is still moving.

This places unnecessary shock loads on internal components.

Avoid Aggressive Acceleration

Repeated hard launches create excessive heat and wear, particularly in CVTs.

Service the Cooling System

A healthy cooling system helps control both engine and transmission temperatures.

Follow Manufacturer Recommendations

Always use the correct transmission fluid and adhere to service schedules.

The Cost of Prevention vs The Cost of Repair

A transmission fluid service may cost a fraction of what a gearbox rebuild or replacement will eventually require. Yet many motorists postpone maintenance because the vehicle still seems to be driving normally.

Unfortunately, transmission damage often accumulates silently. By the time obvious symptoms appear, the repair bill is usually much larger than the cost of preventive maintenance.

The Bottom Line

Modern gearboxes are engineering marvels, capable of delivering smooth performance and impressive fuel economy. But they demand proper care.

This is especially true for CVTs, which have become increasingly common in the Kenyan market. While they can provide years of reliable service, they are far less forgiving of neglected maintenance than traditional transmissions.

The most expensive gearbox repair is often the one that could have been prevented by a simple fluid change.

If you cannot remember the last time your transmission was inspected, now might be the perfect time to start. Your gearbox and your bank account will thank you for it.



How the Global Oil Situation is Reshaping Motoring in Kenya

By Moses Gichohi



The global energy market has been pushed into unprecedented territory. Following severe geopolitical escalations in the Middle East, specifically involving the conflict around the Strait of Hormuz, the international flow of oil faces its largest disruption in history. With nearly 20% of the world's oil supply heavily restricted through this vital maritime corridor, crude prices have soared, forcing refined product costs to all-time highs.

For oil-importing nations, the shockwave was immediate. But few places are feeling the practical friction of this global crisis quite like Kenya.

The Pressure at the Kenyan Pump

Kenya imports all of its petroleum products in refined form, making its domestic economy highly sensitive to international "landed costs" (the total price of importing fuel to the port of Mombasa). When global energy markets fracture, the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA) is forced to pass those costs down to local motorists.

The mid-May 2026 pricing cycle delivered one of the heaviest shocks to Kenyan drivers in recent memory. Driven by the international supply crunch, fuel costs spiked dramatically:

- **Super Petrol:** Rose to KShs 214.25 per litre in Nairobi.
- **Diesel:** Witnessed a massive jump of KShs 46.29, landing at **KShs 242.92** per litre.

This pricing structural flip, where diesel, traditionally the cheaper utility fuel, became significantly more expensive than petrol, has sent shockwaves through the motoring and logistics sectors.

How It's Reshaping Kenyan Motoring

The daily reality of hitting the road in Kenya has drastically shifted over the last few months. Motorists, commercial drivers, and businesses are actively changing how they operate to survive the crunch.

1. The Death of the "Joyride" and Casual Driving

For individual car owners, driving has become strictly transactional. Fuel management apps and strategic route planning are no longer just for tech-savvy drivers; they are survival tools. Carpooling among colleagues has surged in urban areas like Nairobi and Mombasa, and many households are parking their personal vehicles on weekdays and opting for public transport to protect their monthly budgets.

2. A Hard Hit to Public Transport and Logistics

Because diesel powers the backbone of Kenya's economy, its steep climb has heavily impacted the Matatu (public transit minibus) sector and long-distance trucking. Matatu operators have had to raise fares on many routes to cover their daily operating deficits. Similarly, digital ride-hailing drivers are facing squeezed margins, leading to tension between drivers and platform algorithms over base fare rates.

3. The Sudden Urgency for Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (EVs)

If there is a silver lining to the current crisis, it is the rapid acceleration of Kenya's e-mobility transition. What was once seen as a luxury or a niche environmental statement is now viewed as a smart financial shield. Inquiries and sales for hybrid vehicles and electric motorcycles (especially within the boda boda delivery sector) have seen a notable uptick as Kenyans look for

ways to bypass the gas pump entirely.

The Government's Balancing Act

It is worth noting that the situation at the pump could actually be worse. To keep the transport sector from grounding to a halt, the Kenyan government stepped in during the May cycle, deploying roughly KShs 5 billion from the Petroleum Development Levy (PDL) to subsidize the prices of diesel and kerosene.

Without this intervention, diesel would have easily cleared the KSh 250 mark, dragging the wider cost of living and commodity prices up with it.

What's Next?

With Brent crude hovering mid-way through the \$90s per barrel and traffic through the Strait of Hormuz remaining highly volatile, market analysts expect marginal adjustments rather than major relief in the upcoming June EPRA review. For the Kenyan motorist, efficiency, adaptability, and a light foot on the accelerator remain the best tools for the road ahead.

Text box:

Brent Crude is a classification of light, sweet crude oil sourced from the North Sea. It serves as the primary global benchmark for pricing crude oil, with roughly two-thirds of the world's internationally traded petroleum priced against it.

Key Characteristics

• **Light and Sweet:** "Light" means it has a low density, allowing it to flow easily, while "Sweet" indicates a low

sulfur content. This combination makes it cheaper and highly efficient to refine into premium fuels like gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel.

• **The "BFOET" Basket:** Originally named after a single oil field, the modern Brent benchmark represents a blended average of five North Sea oil streams: Brent, Forties, Oseberg, Ekofisk, and Troll.

• **Global Accessibility:** Because it is extracted offshore, it is easily loaded onto tankers and shipped to refineries worldwide.

• **Global Standard:** Traders, governments, and economists use Brent to gauge the health of the global energy market.

• **Financial Trading:** It is actively traded as a futures contract on the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) under the ticker symbol CO.

Brent vs. WTI

While Brent dictates pricing for Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, the other major global benchmark is West Texas Intermediate (WTI). WTI is sourced from landlocked U.S. fields (primarily in Texas) and is slightly lighter and sweeter than Brent. Because it is landlocked, WTI historically involves higher transportation costs and trades at a slight discount compared to Brent.



PREDATORY CAR LOANS: How Some Kenyans Pay Twice for a Car Then still Lose it

By Timothy Albrite



A 2014 Mazda CX-5 valued at KSh1.4 million.
Deposit: KSh250,000.
Monthly instalment: KSh48,000.

To a young professional scrolling through TikTok, that sounds manageable.

What the sales video does not mention is that after four years of repayments, insurance loading, tracking fees, penalties, and late charges, the same buyer could end up paying more than KSh2.3 million for that same vehicle. Miss a few payments along the way, and the car can still be repossessed.

That is the reality many Kenyans are discovering too late, as “lipa mdogo mdogo” vehicle financing explodes across social media.

An AutoNews review of published court cases, borrower complaints, financing agreements and online testimonies reveals a widening gap between legitimate asset financing and increasingly aggressive lending practices that critics say are trapping borrowers in cycles of debt.

Two very different financing worlds

Not all hire-purchase or vehicle financing is predatory.

In a proper asset financing arrangement, a dealer or bank clearly explains:

- The vehicle’s cash price
- Interest payable

- Total repayment amount
- Insurance obligations
- Default terms
- Ownership conditions

A buyer financing a Toyota Fielder worth KSh1.5 million through a mainstream bank may pay roughly KSh1.9 million to KSh2.1 million over several years, depending on interest rates and deposit size. The terms are usually documented clearly, with regulated repossession procedures.

But the market has shifted.

Alternative lenders and aggressive financing firms now target buyers who cannot qualify for bank loans. Many advertise heavily through TikTok, Facebook and Instagram using phrases like:

- “Drive today”
- “No bank statements”
- “No CRB problem”
- “Low deposit”
- “Instant approval”

The focus is no longer the total cost of the car. It is the monthly payment.

And that is where many borrowers get trapped.

In one recent Kenyan case widely discussed online, a businesswoman reportedly borrowed KSh300,000 using her logbook as security. According to leaked repayment breakdowns shared online, she had already paid over

KSh612,000, more than double the original loan, but was allegedly still facing outstanding balances.

The reported breakdown included:

- Repossession fees
- Yard transfer charges
- Insurance balances
- Repeated penalty costs

The vehicle had allegedly been repossessed multiple times.

While the lender’s full position in the dispute was not publicly available, the case reflects a complaint increasingly voiced by borrowers across Kenya’s digital lending and asset financing space: repayments continue to grow long after customers believe they are close to clearing the debt.

Another borrower on a Kenyan online forum described discovering that interest on a financed car would add nearly KSh500,000 to the total over a two-year

repayment period.

Others described the emotional pressure of trying to maintain repayments while also covering:

- Fuel
- Insurance
- Maintenance
- Parking
- Service costs

One user summarised the problem bluntly:

“By the time you repay the loan... You will have coughed up about 140% in repayments.”

How the numbers quietly spiral

Here is how the difference often looks in practice:

A legitimate dealer financing arrangement may look like this:

Items	Transparent financing
Vehicle price	KSh1.5 million
Deposit	KSh300,000
Repayment period	48 months
Monthly instalment	KSh38,000–45,000
Total repayment	Around KSh1.9m–2.1m
Penalties	Clearly stated
Ownership terms	Clearly disclosed

Now compare that to some aggressive financing structures borrowers complain about online:

Item	Aggressive lending structure
Vehicle advertised price	KSh1.5 million
Low deposit	KSh150,000
Monthly instalment focus	“Only KSh49,999”
Hidden additions	Tracker fees, insurance loading, processing fees
Late payment effect	Penalties compound rapidly
Repossession costs	Added to outstanding balance
Final repayment	Sometimes exceeds KSh2.5m
Repossession risk	High after missed payments

A buyer sees the smaller deposit and affordable monthly figure but never calculates the total obligation.

Kenyan courts have repeatedly ruled that financed vehicles legally belong to the lender until the final payment is completed.

That means repossession itself is not illegal if done according to the contract.

But disputes often arise around:

- Whether notices were issued properly
- Excessive penalties
- Auction transparency
- Inflated recovery costs
- Failure to disclose balances clearly

In one Kenyan hire-purchase case, the court found that a lender had unlawfully repossessed and sold a vehicle after the borrower had already paid more than two-thirds of the agreed amount. The court ordered a refund to the borrower.

Legal experts say many borrowers do not understand an important detail of hire purchase law:

Until the loan is cleared, you are effectively hiring the car with an option to own it later.

Miss enough instalments, and the financier can take it back.

Why young Kenyans are especially vulnerable

The “lipa mdogo mdogo” economy is built on aspiration.

A young buyer earning KSh80,000 per month may realistically struggle to save KSh1.5 million cash for a vehicle. But KSh45,000 monthly feels achievable – at least initially.

Social media intensifies the pressure.

Cars are increasingly marketed as proof of success, especially among urban professionals, gig workers and small business owners.

Many buyers also depend on financed vehicles to generate income through:

- Uber
- Bolt
- Deliveries
- Logistics
- Business transport

The vehicle becomes both a status symbol and a survival tool.

That desperation creates ideal conditions for aggressive lenders.

Even insiders are raising concerns.

Discussion forums in Kenya increasingly contain warnings from borrowers and even former industry insiders.

One commenter claimed some lenders “won’t allow” borrowers to independently sell financed cars before repossession, arguing that the vehicle itself becomes the target.

Another user discussing vehicle financing wrote:

“People don’t do their assignments and take financial advice from sales people who are after commission.”

A separate online discussion involving workers in the financing industry referenced concerns about transparency in communicating loan terms to customers.

The warning signs buyers ignore

Financial analysts say the biggest red flags include:

- “Guaranteed approval”
- Extremely low deposits
- No explanation of the total repayment
- Pressure to sign quickly
- Verbal promises not reflected in contracts.
- Unclear repossession terms
- Refusal to provide repayment schedules

Experts also warn buyers to independently calculate the full repayment amount before signing anything.

Because in many cases, the “cheap monthly payment” is the most expensive part of the deal.

Vehicle financing itself is not the problem.

Responsible asset financing helps families access mobility and businesses grow.

But Kenya’s booming “lipa mdogo mdogo” market is increasingly blurring the line between financial inclusion and debt exploitation.

And for many borrowers, the lesson only comes after the tow truck arrives.

Before you finance a vehicle, know its true value. AA Kenya’s Vehicle Valuation & Inspection Department works with reputable lenders to provide accurate, independent vehicle valuations for financing. If a lender insists on using an unfamiliar or questionable valuer, consider it a potential red flag. Protect yourself from overpaying or falling victim to unfair financing practices. Contact AA Kenya today on 0709 933 000 or 0709 933 999.

SPARK PLUGS EXPLAINED

THE SMALL ENGINE PARTS
THAT CAN **SAVE YOU**
THOUSANDS AT THE PUMP.



By Timothy Albrite

Most drivers never think about their spark plugs until the car starts misbehaving. Yet these tiny components, hidden deep inside the engine, play one of the most important roles in keeping your vehicle running smoothly, efficiently, and economically.

A healthy set of spark plugs can help maximize fuel economy, improve engine performance, and reduce emissions. Neglect them, however, and your car could become harder to start, slower to accelerate, and significantly more expensive to fuel.

In many ways, spark plugs are the heartbeat of a petrol engine.

What Exactly Does a Spark Plug Do?

Every petrol engine relies on a controlled explosion to generate power. Inside each cylinder, air and fuel are compressed before a spark plug delivers a high-voltage electrical spark that ignites the mixture.

This ignition creates the combustion that pushes the piston down and ultimately turns the wheels. The process happens thousands of times every minute. At highway speeds, a spark plug may fire more than 1,500 times per minute, enduring extreme heat and pressure.

Without a properly functioning spark plug, combustion becomes incomplete, leading to poor performance and wasted fuel.

Why Spark Plugs Matter

Many motorists associate poor fuel economy with traffic congestion, rising fuel prices, or aggressive driving habits. While those factors certainly play a role, worn spark plugs can quietly increase fuel consumption without attracting immediate attention.

When spark plugs age, the gap between the electrodes gradually widens. This makes it harder for the plug to generate a strong spark. The result is incomplete combustion, which means some of the fuel entering the cylinder is not fully burned.

The engine management system may compensate by injecting more fuel, which can reduce fuel economy.

A healthy set of spark plugs helps:

- Improve fuel efficiency
- Deliver smoother acceleration
- Reduce engine vibrations
- Improve cold starts
- Lower harmful emissions
- Protect expensive components such as catalytic converters

Genuine vs Counterfeit Spark Plugs: Why It Matters

The Kenyan market has seen a growing influx of counterfeit automotive parts, and spark plugs are no exception. At first glance, fake spark plugs may look identical to genuine products. However, differences in manufacturing quality, materials, and heat resistance can significantly affect engine performance.

Counterfeit plugs often:

- Wear out prematurely
- Produce inconsistent sparks
- Cause misfires

- Increase fuel consumption
- Damage ignition coils
- Lead to costly engine repairs

When purchasing spark plugs, always buy from authorized dealers or reputable parts suppliers. Check packaging quality, product markings, and manufacturer security features.

Saving a few hundred shillings on cheap plugs can easily result in repair bills worth tens of thousands later.

How to Tell if Your Spark Plugs Are Going Bad

Spark plugs usually deteriorate gradually, meaning many drivers adapt to the declining performance without realizing something is wrong.

Common warning signs include:

Hard Starting

If your vehicle takes longer than usual to start, especially in the morning, weak spark plugs could be struggling to ignite the fuel-air mixture.

Poor Fuel Economy

A noticeable increase in fuel consumption without any change in driving habits is often one of the earliest signs.

Rough Idling

A healthy engine should idle smoothly. If the vehicle shakes, vibrates or feels uneven while stationary, faulty plugs may be the culprit.

Hesitation During Acceleration

If the engine feels sluggish or unresponsive when you press the accelerator, ignition performance should be checked.

Engine Misfires

Misfires often feel like sudden jerks, stumbles, or momentary losses of power. Ignoring them can damage the catalytic converter.

Check Engine Light

Modern vehicles monitor combustion quality. Persistent misfires or ignition faults will often trigger the check engine warning light.

Reading Your Spark Plugs: What They Reveal About Your Engine

Spark plugs are more than ignition components; they are also excellent diagnostic tools.

By examining the firing tip, technicians can often identify underlying engine problems long before they become serious.

Light Tan or Grey Deposits

This is what you want to see.

A light tan, grey, or soft brown colour indicates healthy combustion and a properly balanced air-fuel mixture.

The engine is operating efficiently, and fuel consumption should be close to factory expectations.

Dry Black Soot

A dry, black carbon coating suggests the engine is running rich, meaning too much fuel or insufficient air is entering the combustion chamber.

Possible causes include:

- A clogged air filter
- Faulty oxygen sensors
- Leaking fuel injectors
- Air intake restrictions

Besides increasing fuel consumption, carbon-fouled plugs weaken spark quality and worsen performance.

Wet, Oily Deposits

An oily spark plug usually indicates that engine oil is entering the combustion chamber.

Potential causes include:

- Worn piston rings
- Worn valve stem seals
- Internal engine wear

This condition often leads to rough running, increased emissions and expensive repairs if left unchecked.

White, Blistered or Burnt Electrodes

A chalky white appearance or melted electrode suggests excessive heat inside the combustion chamber.

Possible causes include:

- Incorrect spark plugs
- Cooling system issues



- Lean air-fuel mixtures
- Fuel delivery problems

If ignored, excessive combustion temperatures can cause severe engine damage over time.

How Often Should Spark Plugs Be Changed?

There is no universal replacement interval because modern spark plugs vary significantly in design and materials.

As a general guide:

- Conventional copper spark plugs: 20,000–30,000 km
- Platinum spark plugs: 60,000–100,000 km
- Iridium spark plugs: 80,000–120,000 km

Always consult your vehicle owner's manual for the manufacturer's recommendation.

Many newer vehicles leave the factory with iridium plugs designed to last well over 100,000 kilometres under normal driving conditions.

Can You Clean and Reuse Spark Plugs?

In some cases, lightly carbon-fouled plugs can be cleaned and reinstalled temporarily. However, cleaning should never be viewed as a permanent solution.

If the plugs are worn, damaged, or approaching the end of their service life, replacement is the safer and more reliable option.

More importantly, the underlying cause of fouling must be identified and corrected.

The Bottom Line

Spark plugs may be small components, but they have a major influence on how your vehicle performs, how much fuel it consumes, and how long the engine lasts.

If your car feels sluggish, is consuming more fuel than usual or struggles to start, the answer may be sitting at the end of a spark plug socket.

A simple inspection can reveal far more than most drivers realize. In fact, those tiny electrodes can tell a detailed story about your engine's health, fuel system condition and even future repair bills.


Sometimes, the difference between a smooth-running car and an expensive workshop visit is no bigger than a spark plug.




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The 7PM-10PM Danger Zone

When the roads open up, but danger quietly increases.

By Andrew Thuku



Data from the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) has revealed a troubling trend on Kenyan roads: nearly 30 per cent of all fatal crashes occur between 7pm and 10pm.

It is a narrow three-hour window, but it has become the country's most dangerous time to drive.

According to the figures, the spike in deadly accidents is closely linked to speeding, particularly after the evening rush-hour congestion clears. Once traffic eases and roads open up, many drivers press harder on the accelerator, often under poor visibility and rising fatigue.

Drivers feel they have 'won back' time lost in traffic. Unfortunately, that is when judgment drops and speed increases.

From Gridlock to Free Flow and then to Risk

Between 5pm and 7pm, Nairobi's roads are defined by slow-moving congestion. Vehicles crawl, tempers flare, but serious crashes are relatively few.

After 7pm, the picture changes dramatically. Highways such as Thika Road, Mombasa Road and Waiyaki Way become freer, inviting higher speeds. In towns, matatus and private cars race to complete final trips of the day. At the same time, pedestrians cross poorly lit roads and boda bodas weave through traffic with limited visibility.

NTSA data shows that many of these nighttime crashes involve:

- Excessive speed
- Failure to notice pedestrians
- Loss of control on corners
- Driver fatigue after long workdays

Alcohol is also a factor, particularly on Fridays and

weekends.

What Drivers Can Do

NTSA is urging motorists to treat evening driving with the same caution as they would during peak-hour traffic.

Key safety reminders include:

- Keep speeds lower than daytime limits where visibility is reduced
- Watch for pedestrians and cyclists near bus stops and estates
- Avoid aggressive overtaking
- Take breaks if driving long distances after work

For matatu and commercial drivers, the authority warns that fatigue combined with pressure to make more trips before curfew or closure times is a deadly mix.

It's not just a Nairobi problem

While urban highways record the highest number of night-time crashes, rural roads are not spared. In counties along major corridors, crashes often happen near trading centres where people walk along unlit roads.

The pressure on commercial drivers

For matatu drivers, truckers, and delivery fleets, the evening window comes with its own pressure. There's often the urge to complete one more trip, hit a target, or finish a long route before stopping for the night. Fatigue builds up, but schedules don't always give room for rest.

That combination of pressure, tiredness, and higher speeds is where many of the more serious crashes happen.

What safer night driving really looks like

The advice from safety agencies hasn't changed much over the years, but it becomes even more important at night.

Slow down, even when the road looks clear. Expect pedestrians near estates, stops, and crossings. Avoid overtaking unless you're absolutely sure it's safe. And if you're on a long drive after work, take a break before pushing through.

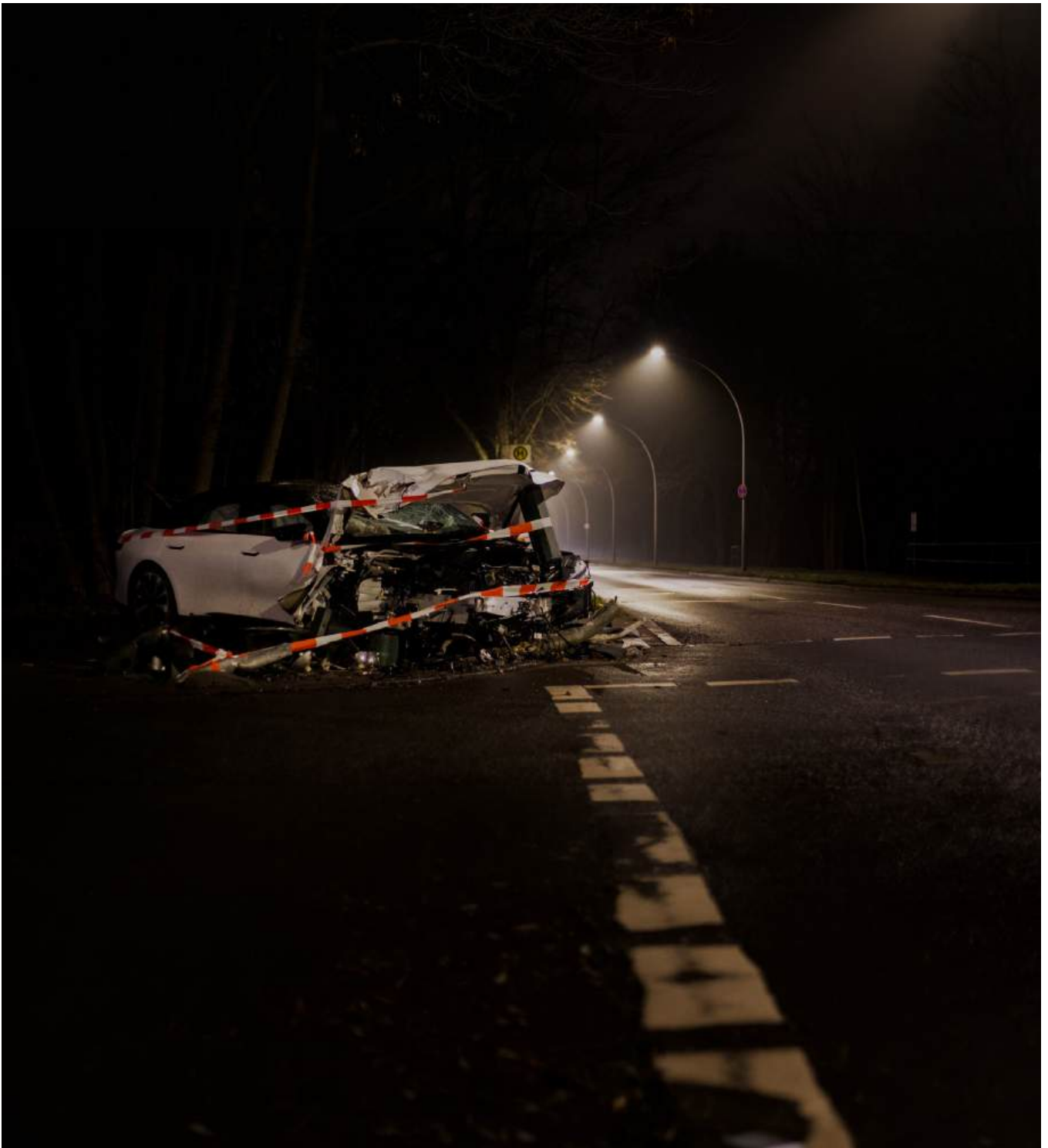
For commercial drivers especially, the message is simple: getting there safely matters more than getting there quickly.

The bottom line

Kenya's most dangerous driving hours aren't when the roads are packed. They're when they empty out.

Because once the traffic disappears, something else quietly takes its place: speed, fatigue, and a sense that the road has become easier than it really is.

And that's usually where the trouble starts.



Year After Year, The Concours D'elegance Never Disappoints

For one Sunday every year, Nairobi Racecourse becomes the center of Africa's classic motoring scene. Long before the judging begins, crowds gather around the paddocks, cameras in hand, eager to catch a first glimpse of familiar favourites and the new arrivals that have travelled from across the region.

For more than five decades, the Africa Concours d'Elegance has remained one of Kenya's most anticipated motoring events. While trophies are awarded for the best-prepared vehicles, the real attraction is the extraordinary collection of machinery brought together by owners who have spent years preserving a piece of automotive history.

Every car has a story. Some have been painstakingly restored from little more than rusted shells, while others have remained in the same family for generations. Every polished chrome bumper, every perfectly aligned panel and every spotless engine bay reflects countless hours of dedication behind the scenes.

The variety is what keeps enthusiasts coming back. British roadsters stand alongside Italian sports cars, American muscle competes for attention with Japanese classics, while European saloons and vintage tourers remind visitors how dramatically automotive design has evolved over the decades.

The motorcycle section is no less impressive. From lightweight commuters to heavyweight touring machines and rare classics, the judging ring is filled with the unmistakable sound of engines that have become increasingly rare on today's roads. Their arrival always draws a crowd, with spectators eager to compare everything from immaculate restorations to well-travelled adventure bikes.

One of the enduring attractions of the Concours is the opportunity to see vehicles that rarely leave private collections. Every year brings fresh discoveries, cars and motorcycles that many enthusiasts have only ever seen in books or magazines. Some make their Concours debut after years of restoration, while others emerge from long-term storage to remind visitors of forgotten

marques and models.

What visitors see on the show field is only a fraction of the work involved. Preparing a Concours entry demands patience, technical knowledge and an obsession with detail. Owners spend months sourcing original parts, rebuilding mechanical components and ensuring every nut, bolt and badge is exactly as it should be. For many, the pursuit of perfection is reward enough, regardless of where the judges place them.

The event has also become a meeting point for enthusiasts from across the region. Every year, competitors drive and ride hundreds, sometimes thousands, of kilometres to Nairobi to be part of the occasion. Their journeys are a reminder that the love of classic motoring knows no borders, bringing together collectors and enthusiasts from across East and Southern Africa.

Away from the judging rings, the atmosphere is unmistakably festive. Families wander through the displays, children discover machines older than their grandparents, fashion shows add colour to the afternoon, and the Auto Expo offers a glimpse of modern motoring alongside its historic predecessors. Food courts, trade stands and heritage displays ensure there is something to keep visitors occupied long after the trophies have been presented.

That is perhaps the greatest strength of the Africa Concours d'Elegance. It is not simply a competition or an exhibition of beautifully restored vehicles. It is a celebration of craftsmanship, engineering and the people who refuse to let automotive history disappear.

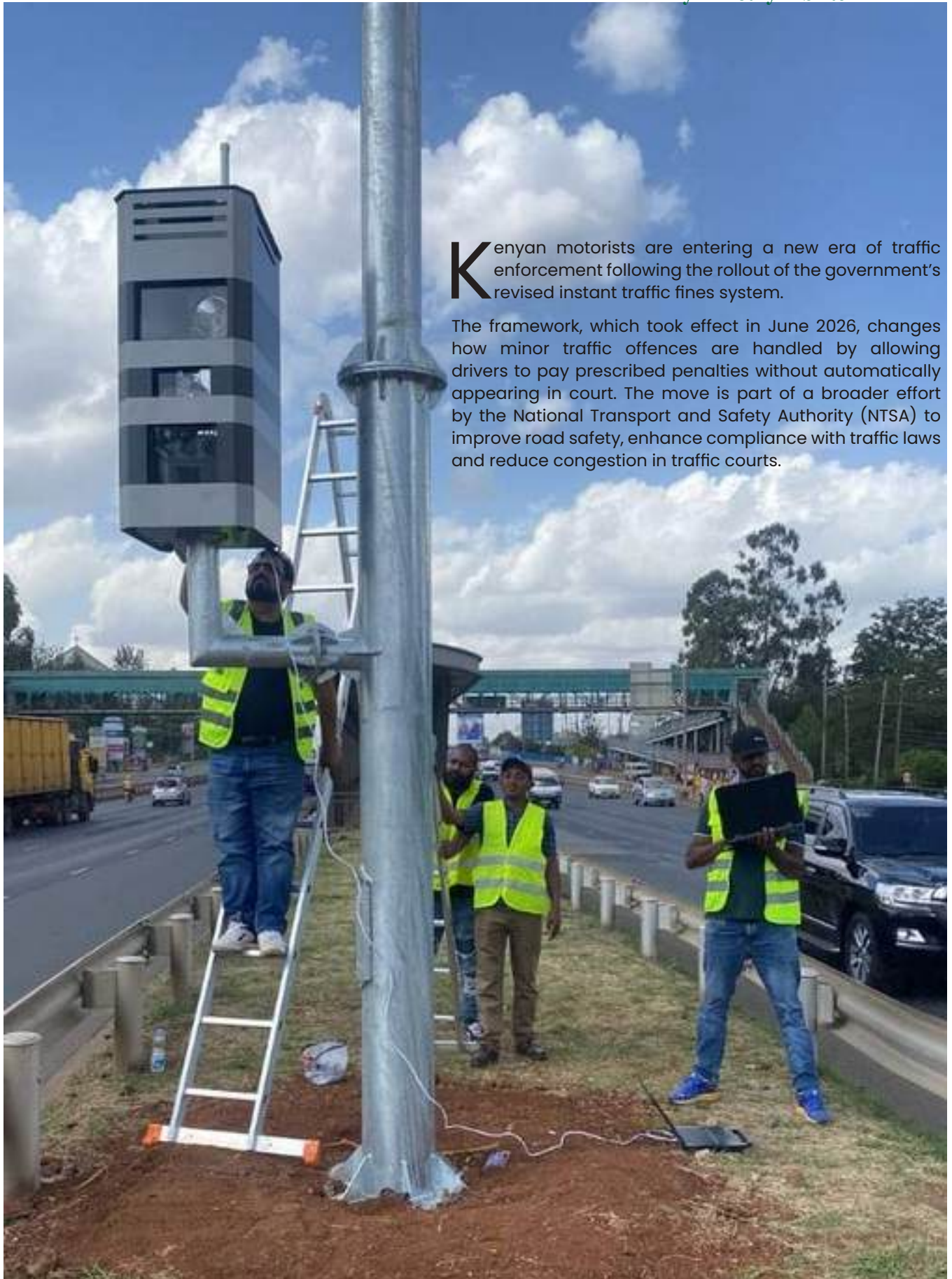
Long after the engines have fallen silent and the Racecourse has emptied, what remains are the stories of remarkable machines, devoted owners and a community brought together by a shared appreciation for the automobile. That is what has sustained the Africa Concours d'Elegance for more than half a century, and what continues to make it one of the continent's most cherished motoring traditions.





NTSA's New Instant Traffic Fines System: What you Need to Know

By Timothy Albrite



Kenyan motorists are entering a new era of traffic enforcement following the rollout of the government's revised instant traffic fines system.

The framework, which took effect in June 2026, changes how minor traffic offences are handled by allowing drivers to pay prescribed penalties without automatically appearing in court. The move is part of a broader effort by the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) to improve road safety, enhance compliance with traffic laws and reduce congestion in traffic courts.

What Has Changed?

Under the new system, motorists who commit certain minor traffic offences will no longer be arrested or immediately required to attend court.

Instead, they will receive a Traffic Offence Notification detailing the alleged offence and the prescribed penalty. Drivers can either pay the fine within the specified period or challenge the accusation through the courts.

How Will You Know You've Been Fined?

Motorists may receive notifications through several channels, including:

- SMS
- Email
- Approved digital traffic enforcement platforms
- Direct notification from a police officer
- Notices placed on a vehicle

The notification will indicate:

- The nature of the offence
- Date and time of the incident
- Location where it occurred
- Amount payable
- Response deadline

NTSA is urging motorists to ensure their contact details are updated to avoid missing important notifications.

Are Traffic Cameras Now Issuing Fines?

Yes.

The new framework allows traffic offences to be detected electronically through cameras and other digital monitoring systems. Once sufficient evidence has been collected, a notice may be issued without the need for a physical traffic stop.

The system forms part of a wider digital enforcement programme that includes expanded camera coverage on major roads and highways.

What Happens After Receiving a Notice?

Receiving a notification does not automatically mean you have been convicted of an offence.

Motorists have two options:

1. Pay the Fine

If you accept responsibility, you can settle the prescribed penalty within the specified period.

2. Challenge the Fine

If you believe the offence was wrongly issued, you have the right to contest it in court, where the matter will be determined by a magistrate.

Can You See the Evidence?

Yes.

NTSA says motorists will have access to supporting evidence, including photographs and video recordings captured by enforcement cameras and monitoring systems.

This provision is intended to improve transparency and give motorists an opportunity to verify allegations before making a decision.



What This Means for Motorists

For drivers, the message is simple: traffic enforcement is becoming increasingly digital and data-driven.

With cameras, automated notifications and digital records forming part of the enforcement process, motorists should expect closer monitoring of speeding, seatbelt use, mobile phone use while driving and other common traffic violations.

Keeping vehicle records and NTSA contact information up to date will be more important than ever.

As Kenya embraces technology-led enforcement, the success of the new system will ultimately depend on fairness, transparency and public confidence. For motorists, staying informed and complying with traffic regulations remains the surest way to avoid penalties and contribute to safer roads for all.



The KD Plate Crackdown: NTSA Targets Illegal Use of Dealer Plates

By Duncan Mwangi

The National Transport & Safety Authority, NTSA has intensified enforcement against the misuse of Kenya Dealer (KD) plates, warning that the green dealer plates are being illegally used as substitutes for normal registration numbers on Kenyan roads.

The crackdown follows rising cases of unregistered vehicles operating for extended periods under dealer plates, including private use, night driving and commercial movement outside the law.

Under Section 24 of the Traffic Act, KD plates are only meant for limited dealer activities such as:

- Vehicle testing
- Delivery
- Inspection
- Transfer between dealerships

NTSA says they are not temporary registration plates for daily driving. "The Authority has not restricted the

months before registration. Others are allegedly used for personal errands, nightlife and long-distance travel despite dealer plates being restricted to official dealer operations. NTSA has now directed law enforcement officers to impound vehicles operating illegally under KD plates and charge both dealers and vehicle owners.

The Authority is also targeting:

- Unregistered vehicles in yards
- Fake number plates
- Improvised paper plates
- Dealers operating outside licensing rules

"There is no provision for the use of printed papers, cardboard, or makeshift displays," NTSA stated in its latest guidance.

Honest dealers versus rogue operators

Legitimate dealers use KD plates briefly and legally.



use of KD plates. The use of dealer's general licence is provided under Section 24 of the Traffic Act," NTSA Director General Nashon Kondiwa said while clarifying the new directives.

Why NTSA is cracking down

For years, KD plates have quietly become common on Nairobi roads, especially on high-end imports and newly arrived vehicles. But transport regulators say the system is increasingly being abused.

Some vehicles reportedly remain on KD plates for

For example, a dealer importing a Toyota Prado may use KD plates to move the vehicle from the port, conduct inspection and deliver it to a buyer before full registration.

The car is then registered under the customer's name.

But industry players say some rogue operators exploit the system to delay registration costs and keep vehicles on the road illegally.

That has created a growing grey market where some cars operate for extended periods without proper

registration records.

NTSA says this creates major enforcement problems because dealer plates are harder to trace quickly during:

- Hit-and-run incidents
- Traffic offences
- Criminal investigations

Illegal night driving concerns

One of the biggest complaints surrounding KD plates is after-hours use.

Motorists regularly report seeing KD-plated vehicles being driven aggressively late at night on major Nairobi roads despite dealer plates being restricted to business-related movement.

Online discussions among motorists increasingly question why some luxury vehicles appear to operate

freely without permanent registration.

Traffic enforcement officers believe some drivers take advantage of dealer plates to avoid accountability while waiting to register vehicles or bypass taxes and compliance procedures.

The bigger issue

The KD plate problem reflects wider pressure in Kenya's vehicle market.

Import taxes remain high. Registration delays continue frustrating dealers and buyers. Some traders are exploiting those gaps.

But NTSA says dealer plates cannot become a parallel registration system.

The Authority has warned that misuse of KD plates will now attract tougher enforcement as regulators push to restore accountability in the motor trade.



Opinion: Road Safety Why Kenyans should back boda boda reforms?

By George M Song'e

Kenya's boda boda industry has evolved into one of the most important economic engines, providing livelihoods for millions of youth and delivering affordable, efficient last-mile transportation to communities across the nation.

The industry, according to a report released in 2025 by Viffa, contributes to close to four percent of Kenya's gross domestic product, generating more than \$5 billion annually. From bustling urban centres to remote rural villages, motorcycles have become an indispensable part of Kenya's mobility landscape.

However, the sector's rapid growth has also exposed significant challenges. Rising road accidents, safety concerns, criminal misuse, and a lack of operational standards have placed the industry under public scrutiny. The National Transport and Safety Authority data shows that by early December 2025, 4,400 Kenyans lost their lives on the roads, of these 1,148 riders and 432 pillion passengers died.

In response, the government has proposed far-reaching reforms through the Public Transport (Motorcycle Regulation) Bill 2023.

The question facing policymakers, riders, and the public is no longer whether regulation is necessary. Still, the question is whether these reforms can achieve their intended goals without undermining the livelihoods

they seek to protect.

At its core, the proposed legislation seeks to transform the boda boda sector from a largely informal industry into a structured, professional, and accountable transport system.

The Bill introduces mandatory rider registration at the county level, establishes County Motorcycle Transport and Safety Boards, enhances rider training requirements, tightens licensing procedures, and improves safety standards. It also proposes measures such as regular motorcycle inspections, passenger and cargo restrictions, and the use of tracking technologies to improve accountability and security.

The objectives behind these reforms are both reasonable and necessary. Kenya experiences a high number of motorcycle-related accidents, many resulting in serious injuries or fatalities. In addition, criminals exploit motorcycles because it is difficult to trace riders and vehicles.

By improving oversight, strengthening safety standards, and enhancing rider accountability, the proposed regulations have the potential to save lives, improve public confidence, and elevate the sector's reputation.

Where similar measures have been implemented effectively, the results have been encouraging.



Increased helmet usage, proper rider training, and licensing requirements have consistently been shown to reduce accident rates and improve road safety.

Registration systems create traceability, making it easier for law enforcement agencies to identify offenders while protecting the vast majority of law-abiding operators. Professional training programmes can also improve customer service, vehicle maintenance, and business management skills, helping riders build sustainable careers rather than merely surviving day-to-day.

Beyond safety, the formalisation of the sector presents significant economic opportunities. A regulated industry is more attractive to investors, financial institutions, and technology providers. It can facilitate better access to insurance, financing, and emerging innovations such as electric motorcycles and battery-swapping infrastructure.

It also enables State agencies to collect reliable data, improve transport planning, and support long-term mobility solutions that benefit both riders and commuters. Yet despite these potential benefits, the proposed regulations have generated considerable resistance within the boda boda community.

Many operators perceive the reforms as costly, punitive, and disconnected from the realities they face daily. For riders struggling with fuel costs, loan repayments, and unpredictable earnings, additional compliance requirements can appear less like support and more like an added burden.

Motorcycle regulation in Kenya is not a non-starter. In fact, meaningful reform is both necessary and overdue. However, for these reforms to succeed, they must strike the right balance between safety, accountability, and economic reality. If implemented thoughtfully, the regulations could transform the boda boda sector into a safer, more professional, and more sustainable industry.

If implemented poorly, they risk becoming another missed opportunity. The future of Kenya's boda boda sector will not be determined by regulation alone, but by the government's ability to create a framework that protects lives while preserving livelihoods. Achieving that balance is not only possible—it is essential for the sector's long-term success and for Kenya's broader vision of modern, inclusive, and sustainable mobility. Concerns have also been raised regarding the creation of new county-level regulatory bodies.

Critics argue that these structures may duplicate the existing mandate of the National Transport and Safety Authority, creating unnecessary bureaucracy and increasing opportunities for inefficiency or corruption. Others question whether some provisions, including mandatory tracking systems and strict operational requirements, can realistically be enforced across Kenya's diverse urban and rural environments.

Perhaps the greatest challenge, however, is not the absence of regulations but the inconsistency of enforcement. Kenya already possesses laws governing

motorcycle operations, yet compliance remains uneven due to weak implementation and limited enforcement capacity. Without addressing this fundamental issue, new regulations risk becoming another well-intentioned framework that exists largely on paper while producing little meaningful change on the ground. The debate surrounding motorcycle regulation ultimately reflects a broader national challenge: balancing public safety with economic opportunity.

Few would dispute the urgent need to reduce accidents, improve discipline, and curb criminal misuse of motorcycles. Equally, few can ignore the critical role the boda boda industry plays in supporting millions of Kenyan families and driving economic activity. The success of these reforms will therefore depend not on the severity of the rules, but on the wisdom of their implementation.

Sustainable change cannot be achieved through a purely punitive approach. Instead, policymakers must work collaboratively with riders, associations, financiers, manufacturers, and other stakeholders to develop practical, affordable, and enforceable solutions. Regulations that are designed with industry participation are far more likely to gain acceptance and achieve lasting results.

Motorcycle regulation in Kenya is not a non-starter. In fact, meaningful reform is both necessary and overdue. However, for these reforms to succeed, they must strike the right balance between safety, accountability, and economic reality. If implemented thoughtfully, the regulations could transform the boda boda sector into a safer, more professional, and more sustainable industry.

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Rising Trend of Vehicle Exterior Parts Theft Alarms Nairobi Motorists

By Timothy Albrite

A disturbing trend is emerging on Nairobi roads, and its unfolding in full view of motorists. Recent viral videos shared across social media platforms have captured suspected thieves targeting Toyota Harrier vehicles in traffic, quickly dismantling and stealing the front grille before escaping or running away.

In a separate incident, a video shows suspected thieves targeting the headlight washers of a Subaru Forester.

The incidents have sparked widespread concern among motorists and renewed conversations around vehicle security in Kenya's urban centres.

The videos show suspects operating with speed and coordination, particularly in slow-moving traffic and at major junctions within the city. In most reported cases circulating online, the thieves target headlight washers and front grille components before disappearing into crowds or weaving through traffic.

While the incidents have attracted significant public attention, authorities have not publicly confirmed the existence of a large organised syndicate specifically targeting Toyota Harriers. However, the repeated nature of the thefts and similarities in execution have raised concerns among motorists and security observers.

The Toyota Harrier remains one of Kenya's most popular mid-size SUVs, valued for its premium styling, comfort and strong resale market. Its popularity has also made replacement parts highly sought after in the local automotive ecosystem, particularly within Nairobi's expansive spare parts market.

Motor industry players say exterior vehicle components have increasingly become targets for opportunistic theft due to their relatively high replacement costs.

Modern vehicles now feature expensive integrated systems within mirrors, lighting units and trim pieces, making even seemingly small components costly to

replace. The viral footage has exposed how vulnerable motorists can become during heavy traffic congestion, especially in situations where vehicles remain stationary for extended periods.

For many drivers, the incidents have shifted attention toward practical security habits while driving in urban environments.

Motorists are increasingly being advised to remain alert in traffic, avoid distractions such as prolonged phone use, maintain awareness of individuals approaching the vehicle and immediately report suspicious activity.

The incidents have also reignited debate around the traceability of second-hand spare parts within the automotive sector. Some industry stakeholders continue to call for stricter oversight within the used parts market to help discourage the circulation of potentially stolen vehicle components.

Insurance experts note that vehicle owners should review their comprehensive cover policies carefully, as coverage for theft of external parts and accessories may differ between insurers.

Beyond the theft itself, the viral nature of the incidents highlights the growing role of social media in exposing road safety and urban security concerns in real time. Videos recorded by ordinary motorists are increasingly shaping public awareness and pressuring authorities to respond faster to emerging crime patterns.

For now, Nairobi motorists remain on high alert.

The current stated incidents may not yet point to a formally identified criminal network, but they have exposed a growing vulnerability facing modern vehicle owners in congested urban environments where a few seconds in traffic can quickly turn into a costly experience.



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