

# Drive safe, stay alive this festive season

**T**he recently released health sector performance report shows that if aggregated, motor vehicle accidents, including boda boda cycle accidents and related injuries, were likely the second leading cause of death behind malaria in the financial year 2024/2025.

This adds to the visual evidence of congestion and reckless driving that is evident on our roads year-round. This is further compounded by the festive season rush, excitement and public transport drive to turn a profit. During this period, the risks on the road rise considerably.

Last year, the police reported 10 deaths on the road at Christmas time. Last year, 5,144 people died in road crashes across the country. Some sub-counties across the country number 6,000 people or fewer, according to Uganda Bureau of Statistics census data. One could say that an entire sub-county perished on our roads last year.

For this reason, concerted efforts should be made to ensure that unlicensed and unqualified drivers are not operating public service vehicles and recklessly operating them to turn a profit this season. Repeated efforts have been made to license and train motorcycle riders.

## **The issue:**

Road safety

## **Our view:**

Let us keep up with the travel advisories, start our journeys on time, be considerate of other road users and obey the traffic rules as we head out to enjoy our festive holidays with family and friends. Life is precious, let's stay safe on the roads this festive season.

These plans should not be stopped or forgotten, as the regulation of that sector could contribute significantly to reducing the loss of human life. Improving the condition of our roads and ensuring the presence of road signs, markings, and street lighting are also key to reducing road carnage. Education campaigns for motor vehicle operators and even pedestrians, including school curriculum content on safety, are another long-term investment that will be worth the while in reducing needless death and injury of citizens. However, it would also reduce health sector spending towards accident injury and trauma treatment.

At an individual level, let us remember that speed kills and that one ought to drive with the prevailing road conditions in mind. Do not drive on narrow or slippery roads as you would drive on wide, unencumbered stretches of highway. This time of year is synonymous with congested roads and the likely presence of inebriated or merrymaking travellers. It is further complicated this year by the election campaign trail convoys.

Let us, in that vein, keep up with the travel advisories, start our journeys on time, be considerate of other road users and obey the traffic rules as we head out to enjoy our festive holidays with family and friends. Life is precious, let's stay safe on the roads this festive season.