

The ministry pledged to unveil an expedited digital system expected to cut registration time from eight hours to just one hour.

BY VICENT LUSAMBYA

Government has moved to quicken the troubled rollout of digital number plates, promising one hour vehicle registration and issuing tough directives to eliminate delays that have frustrated motorists and cost car dealers millions in idle stock.

During a high level meeting in Kampala yesterday, Works and Transport Minister Gen Katumba Wamala criticised what he described as 'excuses' and delayed inefficiencies across agencies. He ordered immediate reforms to speed up the process.

"We have had a lot of back and forth and finger pointing, with each party claiming it is not responsible, we now want to find solutions so that we can establish effective support systems and enable Ugandans to get number plates as quickly as possible," Gen Katumba said.

In part of the renewed push interventions, the ministry pledged to unveil an expedited digital system expected to cut registration time from eight hours to just one hour.

Mr Wistone Katushabe, the commissioner for Transport Regulation and Safety at the ministry, said the reform is part of broader efforts to streamline services and strengthen vehicle identification.

"Once we put this system in place, we want to commit that the ministry will reduce the time it takes to register a new vehicle from eight hours to one hour," he said.

The digital plates embedded with QR codes and radio frequency identification (RFID) chips are being rolled out under a government Programme the Intelligence Monitoring system (ITMS) implemented with Russian firm Joint Stock Company Global Security

Minister orders overhaul of delayed digital plate system



Gen Katumba Wamala, the Minister of Works and Transport (centre), and the Commissioner for Transport Regulation and Safety at the ministry, Mr Wistone Katushabe (right), during the meeting in Kampala yesterday. PHOTO/GEOFFREY MUTUMBA

(JSCGS), aimed at enhancing security through real time vehicle tracking.

But despite the technology's promise, the system has been bogged down by shortages, system failures, and administrative lapses, prompting industry wide concern.

Gen Katumba dismissed earlier claims that supply disruptions linked to Middle East conflicts were to blame, directing implementers to urgently fix logistics.

"Let us not use excuses about missing components. Flights are operating. If you need a special aircraft, I can provide one, we want this system to be as



Wrong entries

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Wistone Katushabe, the Commissioner for Transport Regulation and Safety at the Works and Transport ministry.

efficient as acquiring a driving licence; within 45 minutes, and you have your licence," he ordered.

Officials acknowledged that inter-

nal weaknesses have compounded the problem with Mr Katushabe citing internet outages and frequent application errors often caused by untrained personnel as major contributors to delays.

"There are cases where trained staff delegate work to interns, leading to wrong entries that slow down the entire process," he said.

Car dealers and clearing agents, however, accused authorities of dragging their feet.

Mr Kezekia Bwire, the vice chairperson of the Uganda Clearing Industry and Forwarding Association (UCIFA),

said limited scheduling for plate fitment has worsened the backlog.

"They are mandated to schedule vehicles for plate fitment, but they only do it once a day. They do not work with urgency," he said.

In response, Ms Immaculate Natukunda, the ministry's project coordinator, pledged to increase scheduling frequency to clear the backlog.

"From now on, I commit to scheduling more than once a day, about two or three times daily," she said.

The minister also directed that all vehicles scheduled for installation must be handled the same day, warning against postponements.

Intelligent Transport Monitoring Systems (ITMS) was further instructed to maintain a daily reserve of at least 200 pre-assembled plates.

Concerns over delays in payment verification reported to take up to four days also came under scrutiny.

However, ITMS officials attributed the delays to incorrect information provided by clients.

"When making payments, customers sometimes fail to correctly indicate vehicle details narrations, which results in delays," said Mr David Tussevana, the ITMS Deputy Head of Customer Support.

To plug the gaps, the ministry has ordered the establishment of a customer service desk to resolve errors in real time, while also planning to decentralise installation centres to reduce congestion in Kampala.

"Next financial year, you should not have to travel to Kampala to have your vehicles registered," Katushabe said.

As of May 5, 2026, a total of 100,791 private motor vehicles, 4,525 government vehicles, and 245,384 motorcycles had been fitted with digital number plates, underscoring both the progress made and the urgency to fix a system now under intense public scrutiny.