

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

RISE IN THE NUMBER OF ROAD TRAFFIC CRASHES AND MEASURES THE GOVERNMENT IS PUTTING IN PLACE TO CURB ROAD CRASHES

The Minister of Transport and Logistics (Mr Tayali): Madam Speaker, with the leave of the House, kindly permit me to express my profound gratitude to you for allowing me this rare privilege and opportunity to deliver this ministerial statement on the continued escalation of road traffic crashes and fatalities on our roads.

Madam Speaker, it is, indeed, with a heavy heart that I come before this august House to make this statement owing to the many lives that we have lost in traffic accidents which, but for certain known facts, could have been avoided.

Madam Speaker, it is disheartening that despite several measures which the Government has put in place to curb the scourge, road traffic crashes increased to 32,372 in 2021 as compared with 28,484 recorded in 2020 and 30,648 in 2019. In the same unfortunate vein, the number of fatalities increased to 2,163 in 2021 as compared with 1,690 in 2020 and 1,746 in 2019. These statistics represent 13 per cent increase in road traffic crashes in 2021, and a 28 per cent increment in road traffic fatalities in the same year.

Madam Speaker, in December 2021, the number of road traffic crashes recorded was 2,658 and that number reduced slightly to 2,383 in January 2022. The first two months of 2022 have recorded several fatal crashes that include the following:

Madam Speaker, on 12th January, 2022, at Kateshi along the Kasama/Mbala Road around 0730 hours, a van and a truck collided head-on as the driver of a van lost control of his vehicle. Two people were killed on the spot while three others were seriously injured.

Madam Speaker, sadly, the cause of this accident was driver fatigue according to the accident investigation report.

Madam Speaker, on 27th January 2022, in Pemba, around 0430 hours, a Mitsubishi Rosa bus belonging to the United Church of Zambia and freightliner truck collided head-on as the driver of the bus failed to keep to his lane.

Madam Speaker, sadly, thirteen people lost their lives while seventeen were seriously injured. Here too, according to the accident investigation report, driver negligence, owing to failure to maintain his lane, may have also been attributed to driver fatigue going by the time that the accident occurred.

On 5th February, 2022, at Kafwimbi area in Isoka District around 1300 hours, a minibus overturned. Two people died while three others were injured.

Madam Speaker, the cause of the accident was a result of excessive speeding, according to the accident investigation report.

Madam Speaker, on 11th February, 2022, around 0730 hours at Luanshya turnoff, along the Ndola/Kitwe dual carriage way, a small car and a van collided and two lives were lost. According to the accident investigation report, the cause of the accident was human error owing to failure to stop at a junction.

Madam Speaker, on 13th February, 2022, around 1945 hours, along the Ndola/Kitwe dual carriage way, a truck driver lost control of the motor vehicle and plunged into the Kafue River and this resulted into the loss of two lives.

Madam Speaker, on 14th February, 2022, around 1020 hours, in Kapiri Mposhi, a Zambia Railways train collided with a fuel tanker and two lives of the locomotive operators were lost. According to the accident investigation report, the cause of the accident was human error due to failure by the fuel tanker driver to stop at all level crossings.

Madam Speaker, on 18th February, in Mazabuka, at Nyati area, around 1620 hours, a truck and a small car collided head-on and two people died on the spot. The cause of the accident was human error as the driver of the truck was overtaking improperly. This was according to the accident investigation report.

Madam, on 24th February, at Mkushi, around 0530 hours, a minibus collided head-on with a Tanzanian registered truck. It was in this accident that we sadly lost the Mayor of Mongu and two others. Here too, according to the accident investigation report, the cause of the accident was human error due to the driver of the truck overtaking improperly.

Madam Speaker, on 26th February, at Mpika, around 23 hours, a Lusaka bound big bus from Nakonde hit a pothole, causing the driving to lose control of the vehicle. It careered off the road and plugged into a nearby stream. Seven people died and thirty-three others were injured. The cause of the accident was human error due to excessive speed on a damaged road laden with potholes.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government and, indeed, on my own behalf, I wish to convey the message that our thoughts and prayers go out to the bereaved families. May the souls of our dearly departed forever rest in God's eternal peace.

Madam Speaker, the aforementioned causes and effects of the mentioned accidents clearly spell out two overarching factors as follows:

- (a) human negligence and bad road user behaviour among motorists. Over speeding, failure to judge distance with on coming vehicles when overtaking, drunk driving and the use of mobile phones are major behavioural factors that have contributed to these road accidents;
- (b) poor state of the roads. Allow me to single out the road stretch between Lusaka and Ndola. This road stretch is associated with high traffic volumes and has predominantly been recording the highest number of road traffic crashes. Due to

deep potholes and rutting, travel speeds have reduced to lower than 70 km/h speed limit. This has resulted in impatient driving, which has led to excessive speeding, improper overtaking, misjudging of clearing distance resulting in head-on collision crashes.

Madam Speaker, the Government is concerned with this trend and cannot allow this situation to continue unabated. When we noticed a spike in accidents around September 2021, I instructed the Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA) to implement more stringent road safety enforcement programmes. Among the immediate strategies being implemented to curb this scourge are:

- (a) scaling up road traffic enforcement through combined motorised road patrols by the Zambia Police and the RTSA in order to enforce the law and regulations issued by the Government;
- (b) suspending of drivers licences for road users that are perpetual offenders for over-speeding.
- (c) scaling up the mounting of mobile speed cameras to curb the vice of over-speeding;
- (d) scaling up road safety education using various media platforms in order to improve road user behaviour;
- (e) displaying inside all public service buses the RTSA toll free line 983 and the number plate of the bus and sensitising of passengers to report an over-speeding bus to RTSA call centre;
- (f) enhance surveillance for long distance buses using Global Position System (GPS);

- (g) to mitigate accidents as a result of broken-down vehicles along the highways, the Government, through the RTSA, has procured an additional toll truck to be stationed in the Central Province for quick response for clearing broken down trucks which cause major obstruction on the roads;
- (h) the Government has released funds amounting to K4 million through the Ministry of Infrastructure, Housing and Urban Development of road maintenance on various roads.

Madam Speaker, in the long term, the Government will endeavour to undertake the following:

- (a) construction of a dual carriage way between Lusaka and Ndola, which is an area where almost 60 per cent of all fatalities are recorded. Meanwhile, we shall engage with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Housing and Urban Development and the treasury that short term remedial works be undertaken on roads;
- (b) amendment of the Road Traffic Act No.11, 2002, to introduce regulations such as probationary driving licences and the demerit point system to change driver behaviour. Probationary in the context that a new driver recently obtaining a license cannot drive beyond a certain limit, particularly, on our highways;
- (c) liaise with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security, in order for the RTSA and the Zambia Police to utilise the overhead cameras installed countrywide and enhance over speeding rules enforcement; and
- (d) re-training of Public Service Vehicle (PSV) drivers.

Madam Speaker, with these interventions, we are optimistic that we will reverse the unprecedented rising trend in road crashes and fatalities.

Madam Speaker, most cardinal is that people need to learn to regulate themselves rather than depend on the Government to regulate them. We need to change our behaviour as drivers and road users.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude, I urge members of the general public to assist the nation and indeed, themselves in achieving the country's road safety agenda. I urge all motorists to please adhere to road rules at all times, and not sometimes.

Madam Speaker, the public is also requested to make use of the RTSA and the Zambia Police toll free lines to report any bad driver behaviour. This fight can only be won if we all work together as one with the aim of achieving a higher road safety profile.

Madam Speaker, in summary, we need:

- (a)* safer people to be our drivers;
- (b)* safer transport equipment, in terms of fitness of our vehicles;
- (c)* safer transport infrastructure; and
- (d)* we need to drive at safer speeds.

Madam Speaker, allow me to equally inform the House that we will, as the Government, continuously review our post-crash care system so that we can avoid further loss of life.

Madam Speaker, may I take this opportunity to equally implore the general public to be more empathetic to crash victims and offer them first aid as opposed to taking social media videos. Let us be more empathetic because we are as such as a people.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.