

New Law Could Doom Motorcycle Firms In East Africa

Motorcycles account for over 65% of motor vehicle registrations every month in Kenya, but new rules requiring motorcycle assemblers to use locally generated parts, when no companies in East Africa are manufacturing them, could spell doom for motorcycle firms.

Manufacturers are raising the red flag over the new law, in force effective July 1st, which stipulates a 25% duty remission on motorcycle assemblers who fail to adhere to the new regulations which require parts such as seats, mudguards, wheel

rims, break-gears, exhaust pipes, tires, chassis, batteries and shock absorbers to be manufactured within the East African Community (EAC).

Assemblers are concerned about the capacity of the region to produce the specified parts, and they say such a move is likely to compromise safety standards, kill employment opportunities and make motorcycles unaffordable. "The EAC region lacks capacity to produce these parts," said Honda Motorcycle Kenya Ltd chairman, Isaac Kalua. "Currently, there is no particular company that can produce any of these parts."

The new law crafted by the EAC seeks to encourage consumption of locally produced materials, but it is now causing jitters within the manufacturing fraternity. The Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) called the decision "a bit premature" and KAM Chief Executive Officer Betty Maina told Business Beat, "We are currently investigating to establish whether there is local capacity to produce those parts in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania before we advise the Government on the timing of that decision."

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