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OPINION AND ANALYSIS

Cycling holds the key to tackling air pollution

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If more commercial developers gave priority to parking racks for bicycles and electric as well as hybrid cars, they would help reduce the appetite for second-hand cars. PHOTO | FILE

By Al Hashir Hasham

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Mid this year, the United Nations released a disturbing report titled “Actions on Air Quality” on the levels of Kenya’s pollution.

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The report painted a gloomy picture of a situation that must be taken under control. Over 14,300 Kenyans, it noted, die annually from health conditions that are directly attributed to air pollution.

One of the biggest contributors to this country’s air pollution is vehicles’ exhaust fume, given the huge number of second hand vehicles imported into the country.

These vehicles mostly come with no catalytic converters and with Kenya’s average vehicles registration now standing at 14,005 annually, more dangerous emissions may be witnessed.

That notwithstanding, this side of East Africa is growing at an alarming rate, with

so much natural vegetation quickly being replaced by brick, mortar and glass, as property development and infrastructural expansion continues.

Huge tracts of foliage land, especially around urban areas have been disappearing at a worrying rate, and quickly being hived off for construction of mega buildings. Sadly, today, only about two per cent of Kenya’s land remains forested. It is a case of “from green vegetation to a desert of real and commercial estates.”

Against the backdrop of these environmental challenges, this calls for Kenya to come up with a clear and specific strategy that would help the country avoid going towards the route of New Delhi or China as far as air pollution levels are concerned.

One way the government can assist is by coming up with attractive incentives that would encourage its citizens to adopt environment friendly actions. The Government’s role in coming up with and enforcing environmental laws also need not be belaboured.

Yet, the issue of environmental consciousness isn’t a matter that should be solely left to the government. The concept of Public Private Partnerships has already gained enough momentum, where the private sector has become a key player in national development.

One area where this partnership may be explored with keenness is in the area of green building technology.

In a country that is witnessing such exponential real estate and commercial property growth, green building technology is about coming up with sound architectural structures, while using processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout the buildings’ life-cycle.

It involves such things as deliberate efforts to have as much foliage incorporated in structures and their environments as possible. It also involves such unique facilities such as generous and well-designed bicycle parking racks.

Both commercial and residential developers should be encouraged to adopt the green building technology concept that also gives their properties a competitive edge, as more businesses and Kenyans become environmentally conscious.

For instance, if more commercial developers gave priority to parking racks for bicycles and electric as well as hybrid cars, they would help reduce the appetite for second-hand cars.

PDM Holdings, an East African developer based in Kenya was recently given accolades by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) for its Vienna Court project along State House Crescent in Nairobi.

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ICDC	40.00	8.84% ▲
KPLC	8.70	8.75% ▲
SCAN	19.00	6.74% ▲
BBK	8.50	6.25% ▲

Losers	Price	Change
UMME	13.50	10.00% ▼
CFC	68.00	9.33% ▼
HFCK	13.00	2.99% ▼
ARM	22.50	2.17% ▼
NIC	25.00	1.96% ▼

Movers	Volume	Mkt.Cap
KCB	5.66M	88.15B
SCAN	5.01M	7.20B
SCOM	3.74M	783.28B
KEGN	845,700	36.21B
KENO	620,500	21.19B

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