

BY WALTER MARWIZI

AN economic crimes court has been urged to issue a "a specific order" directing the Police and the Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate circumstances in which the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ), released trillions to black market dealers.

The call came shortly after the exposure of details of shady dealings involving the central bank in court on Wednesday.

Senior Prosecutor Tawanda Zvekare told the court it was important for "the whole picture to come out" in the way RBZ funds were channelled to the black market without any records of the transactions.

He said this practice could not be allowed to continue as some of Zimbabwe's problems emanated from the black market.

RBZ Governor, Gideon Gono, who has led a clean-up crusade of the financial sector, has denied the central bank was the major player on the thriving black market.

He has challenged his accusers with information about such dealings to report to the authorities.

But on Wednesday evidence was presented to the court that the RBZ was releasing trillions of dollars to the black market at a time when the country was facing cash shortages blamed by Gono on "cash barons".

Ironically, the beneficiaries of Gono's trillions immediately became cash barons who went on the black market to buy foreign currency for the RBZ.

Some of the barons were not honest: they did not buy the forex, prejudicing the state of over a trillion dollars, according to the agreed facts of the case.

Among the people named in the court was the Zanu PF MP for Guruve, David Butau who has since fled to the UK.

Agreed facts put before Magistrate Mishrod Guvamombe, in an economic crimes court, exposed how trillions of dollars secretly released by the RBZ ended up at the Roadport in Harare, where the black market barons' "runners" operate.

Zvekare said the RBZ "was engaging in criminal transactions which were bleeding the nation," stressing no institution in Zimbabwe should be above the law.

He said there was something seriously wrong with the way the RBZ conducted its business, as there was virtually no documentation in a transaction involving the release of \$2.1 trillion from the RBZ to the black market.

The money was given to the director of Flat Water Investments, Tazviwana Chivaviro and chief operations officer Nigel Tatenda Marozhe admitted in court that they had received the money following a verbal agreement.

Commenting on how they received the cash, Zvekare said: "We don't know where this verbal agreement was made. Whether it was in a night club, at a football match, Matapi beerhall or RBZ offices. The RBZ released trillions, just like that. No document, nothing, totally nothing."

He said the money was to be used in a "criminal enterprise" by the Flat Water directors who he labelled "runners of the RBZ who engaged their own runners, who in turn engaged their own runners, right up to the street runner at the Roadport".

Chivaviro (42), and Marozhe (27), were to source US\$1 151 851 for the purchase 102 tractors for the Farm Mechanisation programme from South Africa.

The two engaged Phillimon Makuvise, who in turn engaged Joseph Manjoro to assist in raising cash on the black market. Manjoro has already been convicted of violating the Exchange Control Act.

The money was transferred into three accounts belonging to Manjoro and his runners. The accounts are listed as Acondex Investments (Joseph Manjoro), Squarexe (Pvt) Ltd (Royas Mazorodze), Nyamasoka Farming (David Butau) and Antony Hobwana.

But Manjoro only managed to source US\$357 000 of the US\$1 151 851 required. This amount could only buy 39 tractors, the court was told.

"The money given to David Butau . . . and Antony Hobwana by Joseph Manjoro is not accounted for. The \$575 billion that Royas Mazorodze received from Manjoro is not accounted for. Part of the \$708 billion deposited into Joseph Manjoro's Acondex Investments account is not accounted for," reads the charge sheet, which was not disputed.

All in all, the state was prejudiced of \$1 310 813 254 000.

Chivaviro and Marozhe pleaded guilty to the charges but their lawyer Stephen Chibune pleaded with the court to consider what he said were special circumstances when sentencing them.

He said the RBZ had given his clients a weapon to commit an offence, and they had done so in the national interest.

"It's the RBZ that was releasing the money . . . The same RBZ tacitly or impliedly was telling them to use whatever rate they could to raise foreign currency," said Chibune who added it was the State, not his clients who had benefited from the deal.