

Importation of used underwear banned

HARARE - One of the best laws that our country has put in place in recent years is the total ban on the importation of second-hand underwear.

In fact, Tendai Biti and his predecessors at the Finance ministry should have long ago stopped this humiliating reality where Zimbabweans are made to wear undergarments used and discarded by other people. Wearing used underwear is most dehumanising and no government worth its salt should allow its citizens to be abused to this extent. It is a fact that our flea markets receive bales of clothing, some of which is exclusively used underwear – some of which is soiled.

What nation have we become that knowingly subjects its people to humiliation and disease? It is inconceivable for a country to open its borders for the importation of used underwear – to allow our women to wear undergarments that other women in other countries have used and discarded.

Instead of haggling over whether or not to import this or that foodstuff, our government should have long ago taken a position against the importation of underwear – bought, donated or otherwise.

After over a decade of abuse, our government finally managed to act against the importation of used underwear with effect from December 30, 2011.

According to Statutory Instrument 150 of 2011, second-hand undergarments, donated or otherwise, are, with effect from December 30, outlawed. The law reads in part: “Articles of second-hand undergarments of any type, form or description, whether purchased, donated or procured in any other manner”;, are banned.

Biti came in for a barrage of criticism when he said, while addressing a pre-budget meeting in Kwekwe last year, that husbands that bought undergarments for their wives at flea markets were shameless failures.

Most of the people that went for the minister’s jugular believed the minister was suggesting everyone should go to upmarket shops to buy underwear for their wives.

But, as it turns out, the minister was talking about second-hand underwear at flea markets and was right it is a disgrace for any man to buy such underwear for their wives or daughters.

Biti said: “I am told we are now even importing women’s underwear in this country. How does that happen? If you are a husband and you see your wife buying underwear from the flea market, you would have failed. If I was your in-law, I would take my daughter and urge you to first put your house in order if you still want her back.”

The minister was right and the measures that have been put in place to stop this dehumanising practice are one of the best. The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority now charges 40% duty and 15% value added tax as well as \$3 penalty for every kg of imported underwear.

This effectively puts paid to the further importation of undergarments. Who would want to buy used and soiled underwear at 10 times the price of brand new garments at proper lingerie shops?