



MR B NKUTHA

LEKOA town councillors, including the Mayor Mr Esau Mahlatsi, have cut themselves into the Vaal liquor business which has a turnover of more than R40 million a year.

Liquor coup for Lekoa bosses

By JOSHUA RABOROKO

In the 1982-83 financial year, beer, spirits and wine sales in the Orange-Vaal Administration Board area amounted to R40,8-million. Sorghum beer brought in a further R14 million.

Council chairman Mr Esau Mahlatsi has been allocated two liquor stores, costing about R2 million, and South African soccer supremo Mr George Thabe has been given a liquor outlet costing more than R1 million. Mr Thabe is a former chairman of the Vaal Community Council.

Other councillors who have been given bottle stores are Mr M B Mahlatsi (the chairman's brother), Mr P M Mahlatsi (another brother), Mr P H Mpondo, Mr P Mkwena, P Mgcina, Mr E Mofokeng (the chairman's brother-in-law).

Three other businessmen, Mr E Masiko, Mr B Nkutha and Mr H Tsolo, have also been given bottle stores.

The bottle stores are being phased out by the development board and sold to residents, subject to the approval of the Minister of Co-operation and Development.

The Lekoa council has accepted that the liquor outlets be given to the community leaders who should get loans from the development board or banks.

The loans are repayable over a period of 20 years.

The allocation of bottle stores to councillors has sparked off anger among residents and the local taverners' association, who have maintained that they should have been advertised and preference given to shebeeners.

The councillors have also been accused of using the Government's "puppet" institutions in order to get businesses and not to represent the

interests of the residents who elected them. Most councillors did not have businesses before joining the council.

The town council has also been criticised for increasing house rentals by R5,90 for board-owned houses and R5,50 for privately owned homes.

The increases came into effect yesterday. Most of the councillors who were allotted bottle stores have declined to comment on the issue. They said the chairman was the only person allowed to make Press statements.

Mr Mahlatsi has also refused to comment on the issue and said: "I am not interested in the issue and it is not a matter for the Press."

Mr Nkutha said that he earlier applied for a bottle store and was happy that he had been granted one. He was not aware that several councillors have been given bottle stores.

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