

SPEECH BY HON. JUSTICE C.O. IDAHOSA, ACTING CHIEF JUDGE EDO STATE ON THE OCCASION OF THE SPECIAL COURT SESSION FOR THE JUSTICE M.I. EDOKPAYI, LATE CHIEF JUDGE OF EDO STATE.

The Executive Governor of Edo State and Deputy,

My Lords, Justices of the Supreme Court here present,

My Lords, Justices of the Court of Appeal here present,

My Lords Chief Judges of various States here present

My Lords, Presidents of Customary Court of Appeal,

Grand Khadis of Sharia Court of Appeal of various States here present,

Hon. Judges here present,

Members of the National Judicial Council here present

Members of the National Judicial Institute here present,

Members of the Legal Practitioners Privileges Committee here present,

Members of Edo State Exco and State House of Assembly here present,

Traditional Ruler and Chiefs here present,

The Solicitor-General and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice Edo State and other Permanent Secretaries here present.

The Chiefs Registrars of the High Court and Customary Court of Appeal and their Deputies,

Your Worship, the Magistrates,

Learned State Counsel,

Your Honours, Presidents of Area/District Customary Courts and their Members,

Chairman, NBA Benin, Uromi and Auchu Branches,

Senior Advocates of Nigeria here present,

Members of the Body of Benches here present,

Learned Members of the Bar,

Members of the family of the deceased Chief Judge, Hon. Justice M.I. Edokpayi, My Lords Spiritual,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Ecclesiastics 7:1 states: “A good name is better than precious ointment and the day of death than the day of one’s birth”. Ecclesiastics 12:5,7 also state:”Man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it”.

John Donne an English poet wrote: “Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved with mankind. And, therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee”.

In the space of four years we have lost three of our serving Judicial Officers, namely Hon. Justice J.O. Omorodion, Hon. Justice Y. Itua and now

Hon. Justice M.I. Edokpayi who was the Chief Judge of the State before his transition to eternity.

We are gathered today , at this special Court Session, to bid our late Chief Judge farewell, after his capitulation to the cold hands of death on 17th November, 2009, whilst attending the Biennial All Nigeria Judges Conference in Abuja, as the leader of the Edo State delegation to the Conference. It is indeed one of the strange paradoxes of human existence, that after he strove with every ounce of energy he could muster, to give the late retired Justice Amissah a befitting burial, the bell of death tolled for him so soon thereafter.

Death is such a cruel terminator. The overbearing shadow hangs over all of us, and yet we often treat this dark and realistic phenomenon as mythology. I believe the best way to live as taught by all religions is to always be ready to die.

To imagine that the late Hon. Justice M.I. Edokpayi presided over the opening of the 2009\2010 Legal Year in October as Chief Judge and we are gathered here again at this Special Court Session for him on his departure to the land of the spirits, remain unfathomable and a great puzzle to us .

I shall on this occasion, reflect on the life and times of our departed Chief Judge, Hon. Justice Michael Irobun Edokpayi It is not humanly

possible to undertake a comprehensive biographical panorama of His Lordship's life odyssey. His hurried and unexpected exit, from this side of creation, came to all of us a rude shock. I shall however attempt to highlight Those epochal, pivotal and defining moments moments in His Lordship. Life which I consider germane and relevant for our purposes.

HIS EARLY LIFE AND ACADEMIC PURSUITS

Hon. Justice Michael Irobun Edokpayi was born on the 21st of June, 1949. He was born at Eguaholor-Isi in the Uhumwode Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. He is from igieduma in the aforesaid Local Government Area. He attended District Council School, Ikeja-Lagos. He also attended St. Peter's Anglican School, Secondary Modern School, Benin City from 1961 to 1962..

He later went to the famous Immaculate Conception College (I.C.C.) Benin City from 1963 to 1967. For his tertiary education, he attended University of Lagos, Yaba from 1976 to 1979 and the Nigerian Law School, Victoria\`Island Lagos from 1979 to 1980. He was an alumnus of the Nigerian Institute of Advance Legal Studies (Unilag Campus) Lagos, which he attended in 1989. His Lordship was a man of academic excellence and

interlectual sagacity. The discipline he was known for in his life time, I believe was imbibed from his rigorous early life. He grew up in the barracks

as his father was a Policeman. The organized and steely ambience of the Police barracks as well as the Schools he attended had tremendous impact on his life. He loved order and organization. His life was characterized by his penchant for organized speech, organized and formal dressing and organized work. He was the epitome of organization, propriety and formality.

I would like to comment on our alma matter, I.C.C.. I am also an old boy of that famous School. He was my senior in School. I was the classmate of his younger brother Anthony Edokpayi, who is today a Permanent Secretary in the Edo State Civil Service. The Secondary School in those days when we were students was an elite School, earnestly sought after by boys and their parents and guardians. The School in those days Conducted competitive entrance examinations. The level of discipline and academic distinction in the School at that time was enviable and the sporting prowess of the College was admirable. This may be attributed to the fact that you had reverend fathers overseeing the affairs of the School and they inculcated wholesome and desirable habits in the

students under their control.

The iron-cast and Spartan discipline instilled in students of Missionary Schools like I.C.C. provided the springboard for graduates of such Schools to succeed in life. Little wonder therefore that Products of Missionary Colleges before the compulsory take over of Schools by various governments are today occupying various leadership positions in this Country. They are in the commanding heights of business, Commerce, the Judiciary, Politics, Administration, Academic and so on..

His Lordship was a brilliant and exemplary student. He was a voracious devourer and connoisseur of books. It is gratifying to note that the famous School (I.C.C.), is retracing its steps to those halcyon days with the Catholic Church as the present corporate proprietor. At the University of Lagos, where his Lordship studied Law, he had the privilege of being taught by some of the most celebrated eggheads in the Country on different Law Subjects and indisputably had a well-rounded legal Personality . At the University, His Lordship was a member students' parliament.

It is not in dispute that His Lordship had the best education at that time. The Edokpayi family to which he was born placed tremendous value on education. As a consequence of that, his siblings who were exposed to the same valuable education as himself are today occupying responsible

position in bureaucracy, administration and academic in the State Civil Service and various organizations and institutions of higher learning.

His Lordship is married to Mrs Felicia Ayo Edokpayi, who was his veritable consort, lover, companion, best friend, help-mate and provided vital emotional support for him till he died. Their marriage is blessed with children who are making giant strides in various fields of human endeavour.

LEGAL PRACTICE; PRIVATE AND OFFICIAL

His Lordship, Hon Justice Michael Irobun Edokpayi was admitted to the Nigerian Bar on 18th July, 1980. He was defence counsel, Legal Counsel, Sokoto State from 1980 to 1981. He worked in the State Ministry of Justice in the defunct Bendel State and Edo State from 1981 to 1991. As State Counsel, he prosecuted cases in all courts including the Supreme Court of Nigeria. He ascended to the position of Principal Legal Officer in the Ministry before his elevation to the Higher Bench. He received a Merit Award as a State Counsel from the defunct Bendel State Government as part of the activities to mark the 1991 National Productivity Day Celebration on 2nd August, 1992.

Whilst in the employment of the State Government as a Legal Officer, he carved a niche for himself as a thoroughbred professional excellence. He was a stickler for professional ethics, professional decency and professional

excellence. He was altruistic. He didn't cut corners and vehemently
vehem declined to lend himself to short-crunching the rules. He was
always a delight to behold in Court as he marshaled fine points of the law
and summarized evidential facts with virtuosity. He could rightly be
described as a human encyclopedia of criminal law and procedure. His
diligence in research and prosecution made the burden on the judge in whose
Courts he prosecuted very light. His appearance for the State was dreaded
by defence counsel. Accused persons especially in capital offences often
sang the nunc dimittis as his compelling submission were most times
unanswerable. That is not to say however, that he tried to secure conviction
at all cost. He knew when to draw the line between his duties as a
Prosecuting Counsel as permitted by our adversarial criminal jurisprudence
and that of an inquisitor or prosecutor which is permitted
And that of an inquisitor or prosecutor which is permitted in the
inquisitorial and continental system of jurisprudence, which its however
alien to our shores.

AS JUDICIAL OFFICER

Hon, Justice M.I. Edokpayi was appointed a Judge of the Customary
Court of Appeal Edo State, on 8th December, 1991. He was transferred to
the High Court of Edo State, on 27th May, 1993. His Lordship adjudicated

In various Judicial divisions in the State. He served as Chairman Mobile Court for trial of Petroleum Products Offenders in nine Local Government Areas of Edo Central and Edo North in the State, in 1994.

He also performed several national assignments. He was Chairman Failed Banks (Recovery of Debt) and Financial Malpractices in Banks Tribunal, Zone 4 Ikoyi from April 1996 to September, 1999. He was Chairman, National Assembly Governorship and State Assemblies Tribunal Nasarawa State, from April to July, 2003. He also served as member, Edo State Local Government Election Appeal Tribunal from September to October 2004. In all the assignments he was given at the State and National levels, His Lordship performed his Judicial duties creditably without blemish. He carried out ad-hoc Judicial duties with a keen sense of Of mission, patriotism and dedication. He was unapproachable, impenetrable and incorruptible. He was a self-contained man and detested the brazen pursuit of materialism and empicureanism.

As a High Court Judge, he delivered several cerebral lectures at various seminars. On 7th March, 2000, His Lordship delivered a paper in titled: "A day in a Criminal Court", to all magistrates in the State. The paper was comprehensive and encompassed appropriate sections of the criminal procedure law. It was very well received by his listeners on that

occasion.

Other papers delivered at other seminars include: “The rule of law in the sustenance of Democracy”, at the law week of the NBA, Benin Branch April 2001, “The role of the Bar and Bench in a modern Democracy”, at the Law week of the NBA Benin Branch May 2002, and “Effective Court Inspection – A panacea for Efficient Administration of Justice”, a paper His Lordship delivered to Customary Court Judges in the Southern States of Nigeria, to wit: South-South Zone on 9th to 12th October 2001.

His Lordship reached the apogee of his Judicial career when he was appointed the Chief Judge of Edo State on 9th November 2005 by the then Executive Governor of the State, Chief Lucky Igbinedion. In the course of His Judicial career he attended several International Conference in Europe, Asia, America and in Africa. As Chief Judge, His Lordship was a member of the Body of Benches, a member Board of Governor of the N.J.I. (National Judicial Institute), and a member Legal Practitioner Privileges Committee (LPPC).

I thank the Committee for graciously postponing the meeting Scheduled to confer the position of Senior Advocate on some Counsel, as a mark of honour to the late Chief Judge. That decision is worthy of commendation. He was also the constitutional Chairman of the State

Judicial Service Commissioner. As Chief Judge of Edo State, Hon. Justice M.I. Edokpayi wrote or delivered some papers. He presented a brief paper in honour of Hon. Justice S.M.A. Belgore then Chief Justice of Nigeria titled: "It is Contempt of Court or Abuse of Judicial Power".

He also wrote another paper titled: "Suspended Sentence: Its Desirability In Nigeria" which was included in a book of essays in honour of Hon. Justice M.I. Uwais (GCON) former Chief Justice of Nigeria. These papers demonstrated intense Judicial and Legal knowledge and intellectual Fervor, which were the hallmarks of our departed Chief Judge..

In the course of his Judicial career, he delivered several landmark judgments and decisions on all areas of our substantive and procedural law. Time may not permit us to reproduce these judgments in this short address. You may wish to get an insight into his Judicial philosophy by reading a book. I just discovered that encapsulates his judgments. The book is titled: "Preserving The Law for Posterity: A compendium of some pronouncements of Hon. Justice M.I. Edokpayi", edited by two University lecturers. I know we have several things to do today, however, I intend to highlight few of these judgments in a synoptic form. In *Momodu v Momodu* a judgment he delivered in Benin City on 27th November 2003,

he defined what constituted terms of settlement and when it becomes binding on parties, citing Supreme Court and foreign decisions in elucidation of his comments therein. In *Hon. Peter Nosa v Abusomwan v. Orhionmwon Local Government Council and Ors.*, delivered on 3rd August 2001 at Abudu. His Lordship made several Judicial pronouncements on crucial issues like Jurisdiction, separation of powers and internal affairs of the legislature, and the justiceability or non-justiceability of the validity of an election into or removal from office of legislative officers . In the *State v. Sunday Ehimuyein and ors.*, delivered on 20th April, 2004, His Lordship reiterated the purpose of a trial within trial, and how the court should treat an accused person's evidence which is an afterthought. Those issues may appear trite and settled, however the judgment explained them with tremendous clarity and was buttressed with several Judicial authorities.

The late Chief Judge had a capacious and sublime memory of case law, and could recall and cite relevant Judicial decisions with effortless ease and enthusiasm in appropriate circumstances and occasions. He would cite such authorities and the names of Justice that sat over such matters on appeal and even the particular Justice that wrote the leading judgment down to the Court off first instance to the amazement and admiration of those privileged To hear him.

He was a great communicator. Clarity was the hallmark of his manner of communication. He often spoke with simplicity and forcefulness. He was an orator of some sort. He could speak for hours without the occasions grammatical slips associated with such peroration. He also wrote with clarity and simplicity devoid of verbosity and grand standing. ‘M.I.’ as he was popularly referred to dispensed justice to all manner of persons, devoid of prejudice, no matter whose ox was gored, without affection or ill-Will. He was uncompromisable and unpurchasable. He saw the office of a Judge as a high calling from God, to whom we shall all account at the end of time. He had inimitable integrity without any whiff of scandal. That perhaps explained his seeming sanctimonious posturing which some persons misconstrued as arrogance.

“M.I.” could sometimes be very blunt when he spoke. He was not given to double-speak, prevarication or undue regard to niceties. You always knew where he stood on sundry issues and occasions. He didn’t believe in the undue politicization or colouration of language, if that meant a retreat from the region of candour. For that reason he was sometimes misunderstood and often exposed and susceptible to verbal fusillade. He however remained true to self and that defined his manner of speaking and style of communication in his life time on earth.

The office of the Chief Judge necessarily involves the administration of men, resources, time and equipment. He believed and insisted on strict accountability and fairness in the performance of his administration duties. His doors were always open. He effectively applied the carrot and stick administrative policy for optimal results.

Several infrastructural and physical developments were carried out during his time as Chief Judge. Time may not permit us to highlight all his accomplishments in that regard. However, it is worthy of note that several renovations of Court halls were carried out as well as Chambers of Magistrates and Judges. Television sets were purchased for the Chambers of Judges, within Benin, Magistrates were given air-conditioners and refrigerators in their offices. A wall fence was built round the high court and several renovations and constructions are presently on-going with the assistance of the Executive Governor of the State Comrade Adams.A. Oshiomhole.. He believed the Judiciary should be well financed in order to carry out its constitutional imperatives as adumbrated in Section 121(3) of the Constitution.

As Chairman of the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) he performed his constitutional role with candour, courage and effectiveness with the support of other members of the Judicial Service Commission. Several

persons were appointed as staff of the Judiciary. He facilitated the appointment of eight Judges of the High Court and Customary Court of Appeal, in the State. Several Magistrates were appointed and Magisterial Districts were duly created to bring justice to the grassroots and minimize the sacrifice and expense incurred by litigants in the past. Errant staff Received appropriate punishments, deserving staff were promoted regularly and consistently without undue delay.

As head of the Judiciary, His Lordship maintained a peaceful, fruit and cordial relationship with the executive and legislature arms of government. There were no reported case of friction in his life with any arm of government. This harmonious and symbiotic relationship did not in any way compromise the independence of the Judiciary, which he protected with zeal and fervour. He always emphasized the truism and fact that he only Possess concurrent or coordinate jurisdiction with His brother Judges and could therefore not influence them in the performance of their judicial duties. His Lordship maintained an excellent relationship with the Bar (outer and inner) as head of the Judiciary. The Bar and Benches worked together in the effective administration of justice in the State. His Lordship was also a member of the World Jurist Association.

He conducted regular visits to the prisons as Chairman of the Administration of Criminal justice Committee with the logistical support of the State Government, as well as the moral and judicial support of Judges Magistrates, Customary Court Judges and other supporting staff. During such visits, enfeebled, sick and long time detainees without case files or police reports or those who were unjustly detained were set free. He was However always mind of the danger of letting recidivists loose on society as he always stated clearly that they could re-enact their criminal precclivity. He always tried to balance the vociferous demands of civil society in their insistence on fundamental rights of detainees and the need to minimize the Deleterious effects of demonized criminally inclined persons on society. All categories of staff were exposed and sent to different seminars that held across the Country to sharpen their skills and intellectual perspicacity.

HIS RELIGIOUS LIFE

He love loved the Lord Jesus Christ according to his own insight of our Saviour. He may not have had the evangelistic zeal and missionary fervour of St. Paul, or possessed the holiness and selflessness of mother Theresa, he however served the Lord Jesus according to his own understanding. One could cite several instances to show His Lordship's

Christian conviction. He was at the Deeper Life Benin City crusade and spoke to the whole of Africa via satellite and committed the Edo State Judiciary to the Lord Jesus Christ. He gave generously to his Church, the Catholic Communion.

He was indeed a friend to several Catholic Priests. He loved to pray especially in a group with others. In the period he perceived he had some Challenges, he organized a lot of such prayer sessions. He honoured a lot of invitations to Churches of denomination different from his own and was a friend of many men of God and Clergy. He gave his moral support to the Christian Layers Association of Nigeria (CLASFON). His knowledge about bible was commendable and could not be attributed to his Diligent study of the word of God.

As a stanch Catholic, he attended mass every Sunday save in dire circumstances. As a denomination of his unalloyed Catholicism he had several icons and images in his office and at home . The religious aspect of the opening of the legal year was always celebrated at his parish, St. Augustine Catholic Church.

Although he was a strong adherent of the Catholic Church, he was not narrow minded, provincial or parochial in his relationship with other

denominations. He shared fellowship with brethren from other denomination if the need arose or if there was such a gathering for worship. He thus exhibited the true spirit of unity and ecumenism.

His Lordship had tremendous respect for people of the collar and cassock. This is not unexpected in view of his background and his days at the famous I.C.C. He was always enamoured by the discipline, sense of duty commitment and devotion to the Creator exhibited by ministers of God.

SOCIAL AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

His Lordship was known for his sartorial elegance. If he was not Formally dressed in the traditional black suit for judges and lawyers, he often wore well-tailored flowing Agbada at ceremonies and occasions.

This outfit always went with the ashoke or damask cap folded to one side. His Lordship was usually very real in that attire in view of his fairly bulky frame.

When you found him in high spirit, he was usually all smiles and full of mirth, regaling every one with jokes, and would often pop the champagne or red wine for all to share. On such occasions he could be remarkably generous. He was a caring humanist. He visited the sick and those who suffered one form of calamity or the other amongst the staff and Judicial

Officers. He attended ceremonies of all sorts, and contributed his financial support on such occasions. "M.I." was gregarious and sociable. He desired and craved for friendship. He demanded extreme loyalty from his friends. nollywood stable. He would even retell the latest of such. Apparently some persons may have undue advantage of this nature of his for their selfish ends. He however, strove to be a friend to all. Man they say is a social animal, but the Judicial Officer is discerning and discriminatory in his social relations,

A psychological profile of his life would reveal that His Lordship was an amalgam of the four temperamental traits identified by psychologists, namely: Choleric, melancholic, sanguine and phlegmatic. He could oscillate between gregariousness and gaiety to sobriety and contemplation. His Lordship was very diligent, and the energy he expended on his duties often showed superhuman strength, He was an irrepressible workaholic. Always wondered whether he ever had time for leisure. Not too long ago, he volunteered the information that he enjoyed African Magic from the movies. Discounting the torrid tales of witchcraft, black magic and sybaritic Epicureanism, we all agree that the nollywood movies indeed reflect the deeds misdeeds and events in society.

His Lordship was the President of the Boys Scouts Movement. He also supported several noble and worthy causes. He was a recipient of several awards from different organizations. This was in recognition of his sterling leadership qualities and his support of noble and philanthropic causes.

Attempting a psychological profile of any person belongs to the realm of psychoanalysis. I do not pretend to be a psychoanalyst but having worked with the late Chief Judge over time, I wish to say one or two things about the challenges of leadership. Leaders contrary to popular views are often lonely. No wonder His Lordship sought quality friends and companionship. Every leader wants to be praised and not harshly criticized. It is also true however that criticism is an inevitable price to be paid for leadership. Only that such criticisms should be constructive and creative and not destructive. Leaders sometimes have short fuses. This is so, because most times they deal with so many things at the same time which inexorably tasks their intellect, emotions and physical strength. Every idiosyncrasies and temperaments. Let us therefore and not Judge "M.I.", too harshly. History remains the rightful and final Judge. I believe history leader comes into a position of leadership with his own peculiarities, will judge him kindly. He was not a perfect man, otherwise he would have been

God and he was not. Like all of us, he had his foibles and frailties but he was without question a jolly good fellow. He did his best within the purview of available resources and stretched himself to the limit of his finite capabilities in the performance of his respective responsibilities. He was a man of great ability, purpose and energy. He possessed a can do mentality.

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL MUSINGS

His Leadership may have died before reaching the age of retirement and thus could be said to have died relatively young. Let us not forget however that some of the world's great personalities like Alexander the Great, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Martin Luther King (jnr) and our own Muritala Muhammed and Chief M.K.O. Abiola and several others died in their prime and their contributions to the history and development of the world they lived in till date is widely acknowledged.

M.I.'s contribution to the administration of justice and enthronement of Judicial excellence will remain indelible in our hearts, minds and consciousness. There is the certainty of death and the brevity of life. A hundred years from today. All of us would have been dead and transited to the other side of creation. Weighed against the timelessness of eternity two hundred years is like a drop in the ocean.

Time on earth is too short for our little wars and bickering. As long as it lies within our power as scripture recommends let us live peacefully with all men. Then there is the futility of the relentless and reckless pursuit of materialism. The late Chief Judge built a stately house but never lived there for any length of time before untimely expiration. We all have a rendezvous eternity. We only pray that God will help us to accomplish our visions, dreams, purposes and destinies before our transition to the timelessness of eternity.

CONCLUSION

At the special Court Session for the late Hon. Justice Y. Itua , His Lordship prayed in his speech on that occasion thus: “I want to however assure all of us gathered here today, that by the grace and power of God Almighty this Special Session for the late Hon. Justice Y. Itua shall be the last during my tenure as Chief Judge. Indeed it is my prayer that we no longer be faced with a situation of a judge dying in office”.

Could it be that the Lord did not answer that prayer? But come to think of it, Who are we mere mortals to question, the will, purposes and ways of Divine Providence. As the upright man job said in scripture in Job 1:21(B): “The Lord gave and the Lord had taken away, blessed be the name

of the Lord”. Romans 11:33 states” O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out”.

We are completely reconciled to the imponderable and infinite will of our Creator. No human being can pretend to have the wherewithal to unravel divine mysteries.

Beyond all this, it must be restated again and again that the sedentary life style of Judges poses its non peculiar challenges. Government has to pointedly address the health issue confronting Judges in the performance of their Judicial duties. Judges write in long hand, sit for long hours, work in dingy and oppressive Court rooms and environments, are subject to the vagaries of epileptic power supply, have to meet deadlines for the delivery of judgments and rulings, and engage in journeys to Stations outside Benin. The late Chief Judge traveled to Abuja for Judicial Policy meetings from time to time. It can never be in doubt that there are health hazard associated with the performance of Judicial duties by Judges. There is need for a comprehensive and good insurance policy arrangement for each Judge, and government sponsored regular medical check ups both locally and abroad has become inevitable, crucial and urgent. The step rise in the incidence of

Heart diseases referred to as cardiac arrest or sudden death syndrome amongst the privileged class is worrisome. It has become expedient for all of us to re-evaluate our habits, orientations, listen more to the subtle messages from our bodies and minds and the inevitable of regular medical examinations.

Palms 146:4 states “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish”. It is Good by to our clear Hon. Justice Michael Irobun Edokpayi. May God be merciful to him and grant him eternal life. May God also keep protect and bless his wife, children and the entire Edokpayi family. May the Almighty God grant all of us the fortitude to bear the painful loss occasioned by his untimely demise.

I thank His Excellence the Executive Governor of the State, Comrade Adams A. Oshiomhole for bankrolling the entire burial expenses. I Thank my brother Judges for their sacrifice of time, intellect, energy and resources towards making the burial ceremonies successful.

I thank our numerous distinguished guests for making time inspite of their tight schedules to bid our Chief Judge farewell. I thank members of the family of the deceased for their support in many other ways. I thank all Judges of the lower Courts, members of the inner and outer bar, the press, friends and well-wishers for their varied contribution, solidarity and

tremendous show of love to the deceased Chief Judge during his life times as well as their support towards the successful burial ceremonies organized for His Lordship. I thank the Priest and Laity of St. August Catholic Church and other Church organization for the spiritual strength and support at these ceremonies. May God bless us all Amen.