

**RIVERS STATE HEAD OF SERVICE, RUFUS N. GODWINS
KICKS OFF THE GAME AND RUNS COMMENTARY IN A NOVELTY FOOTBALL MATCH
PLAYED IN HONOUR OF OUR COLLEAGUES WHO EMERGED VICTORIOUS
AT THE JUST CONCLUDED LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

It was intense on Saturday, on the 18th day of September, 2032 at the Rivers' Football Club stadium otherwise called the Port Harcourt Civic Center as the NBA PH Branch football team played host to the Amalgamated All Stars F. C. in a novelty football match played in honour of our members who were elected Chairmen in the recently conducted local government elections.

Recall, that the quadruple of Hon. Ben Eke, Esq., Hon. Chidi Lloyd, Ph.D, Hon. George Ariolu, Esq., Hon. Erastus Aworte were elected Chairmen of Ahoada East, Emohua, Obio/Akpor and Andoni Local Govt. Area, respectively in the last LGA elections.

Interestingly, the quadruple are members of our dear branch, hence, the novelty football match which was played in their honour as a congratulatory gesture from the branch.

The football fiesta which ended in a one all stalemate was kicked off by the Head of Service, Mr. Rufus Godwins who in sheer display of his ecstasy and love for the round leather game, took up the microphone and ran commentary for the match.

The erudite R. N. Godwins' advocacy skills were ably deployed and likened to that of the legendary Peter Drury of the English Premier League.

In attendance were, the Head of Service, Rufus Godwins, Esq., Obio/Akpor Local Government Chairman, George Ariolu, Esq., Andoni LGA Chairman, Erastus Awortu, Esq., the NBA PH Branch's Sport Committee Chairman, Hon. Solomon Sokolo who doubles as the member representing the good people of Abua/Odual State Constituency in the Rivers State House of Assembly and Chairman, House Committee on Judiciary, our branch Chairman, Prince O. Nyekwere, Esq., while the Chairmen of Emohua and Ahoada East sent their representatives for the August event.

Precious Dike.



R. N. Godwins - Head of Service, Officiating Referee, NBA PH Chairman - Prince Nyekwere and Hon. Sokolo - Member, Rivers State House of Assembly before the Match kick-off.



NBA Port Harcourt Team



Amalgamated All Stars Football Club



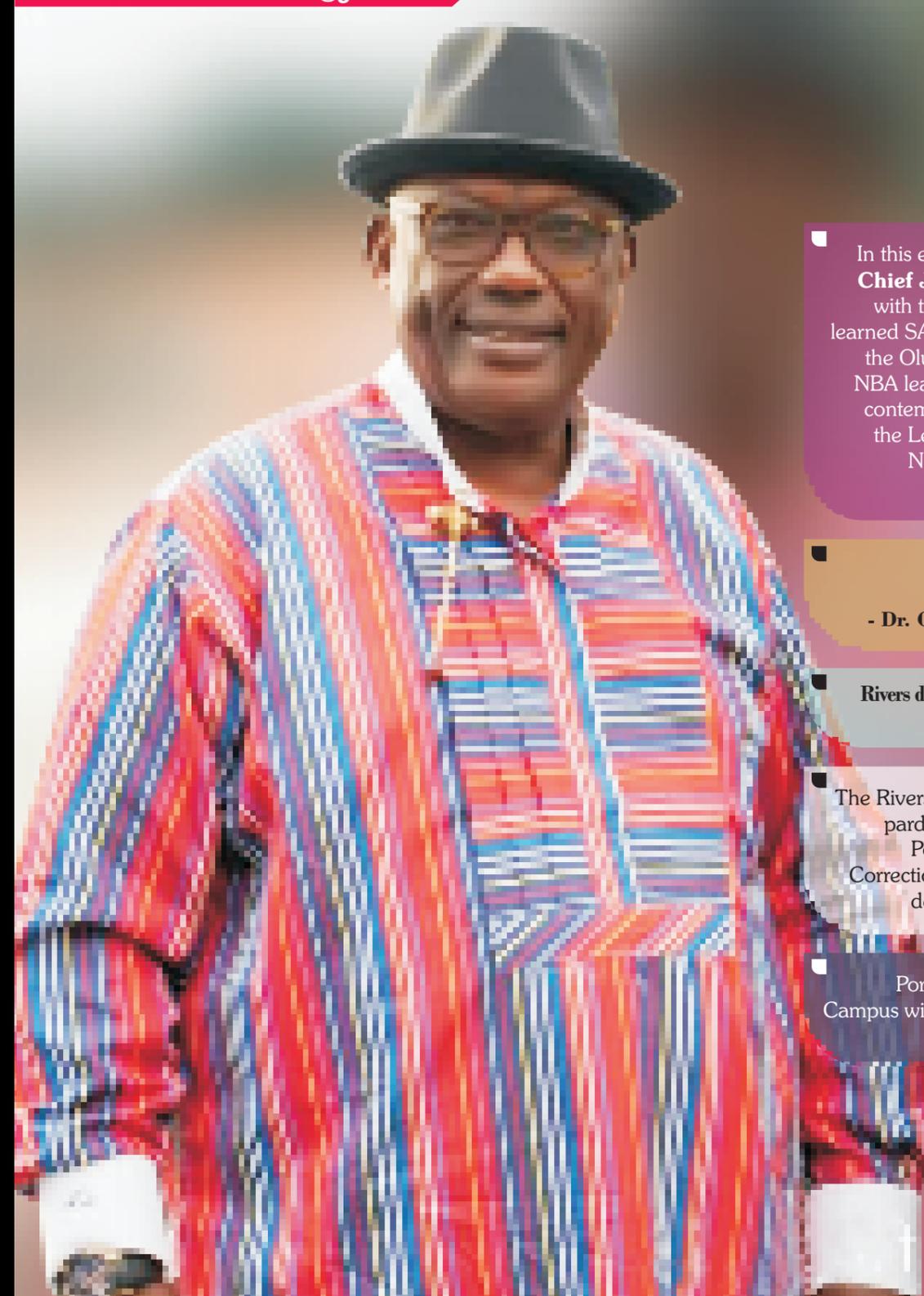
To enhance best practice as the basis of true pride in the profession

2021 SEPT. EDITION

www.nbaph.org.ng

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE NBA PORT HARCOURT BRANCH N200

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In this exclusive interview with **Chief J. K. Gadzama, SAN** with the Bar News Crew, the learned SAN declares support for the Olumide Akpata, Esq. led NBA leadership, comments on contemporary issues affecting the Legal Profession and the Nigerian society at large. Details inside.

**Again the Judiciary:
The Unseen Wounds**
- Dr. Chukwuma A J Chinwo

**Rivers drags FG to Supreme Court
over VAT Revenue**

The Rivers State Judiciary grants pardon to inmates from the Port Harcourt Maximum Correctional Services as part of decongesting the Prison.

Port Harcourt Law School Campus will be the best in Nigeria
- Prof. Chiroma



Editor's Note

CONSPECTUS

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We remain resolute on our resolve to keep improving on the quality of our output. It is pursuant to this avowal that we increased the number of pages and also repackaged the Bar News.

We are not unmindful of the challenges, however, we are poised to stop at nothing in surmounting the fisticuffs. We appreciate your constructive criticism of our works.

Dear Colleagues, we welcome you to yet another edition of the Bar News. Do have an interesting time.

From the desk of the Editor-In-Chief.

Dear Colleagues,
Take notice that interested members of the branch who wish to publish their works in the Bar News are enjoined to forward same to the understated email address: nbaphbarnews@gmail.com

Thanks.

Precious U. Dike, Esq.
Publicity Secretary.

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MENTION



Congratulations **David E. Uranta, Esq.** on your successful Wedding Ceremony

Picture news of the opening of Chioma Choko's Lord Choko Bay Law Office



Chioma Choko, Esq. and Her Worship Nneka Echezulo Eze-Obuzor



Chioma Choko, Esq. reading the Chronicle.



Presentation of books to Lord Choko's Bay library by Dr. Jerry Amadi



The NBA PH Branch Chairman and Hon. Sam Ogeh of the Rivers State House of Assembly



Chioma Choko, Esq. and colleagues

Our exclusive interview with CHIEF J. K. GADZAMA, SAN

Those who had the privilege to personally interact with Chief Gadzama, SAN will admit that it has never been a dull moment with the amiable Silk. Chief Gadzama, SAN is a consummate Bar man, erudite Senior Advocate of Nigeria, a philanthropist and a jolly good fellow. We wish you a good reading of this exclusive interview with the Bar News crew. Below is the full text of the interview.

Sir, with this opportunity to hear directly from you, who really is Chief Joe-Kyari Gadzama, the first Senior Advocate from Borno State.

Well, it is always difficult to define one's self but if I must, I will say that I am a man who came from humble beginnings in a village called Lassa which is situated in Askira/Uba Local Government Area, Borno State. **"I am a person who God Almighty has favoured and permitted to become the first Senior Advocate from my home State, Borno State and the entire North-eastern region of Nigeria at just 11 (eleven) years at the bar."**

I am an individual who by the grace of God has achieved great things as a lawyer from very modest beginnings and I am now at the stage of my career where I want to continue to give back to my profession and the larger society, the younger lawyers particularly and all who it may please the almighty to bring my way in need of my assistance both human and material to the best of my ability.

2. What are the famous experiences of your early days in legal practice?

The beginning of a venture can be

interesting. Life is like a venture – full of challenges and experiences. My early days in practice were no different. After my youth service with my Uncle, Mr Ismail Gadzama, I established my firm and began to practise on my own. At this point, I did not have a car, office or any equipment whatsoever. It was a one-man practice that required me to work round the clock without any day off like many young lawyers today today under very challenging circumstance nationwide.

I had to be a scavenger to even attempt to succeed. During this period, I had to deploy several skills to save operational costs and acquire clients. I regularly picked used papers from the floor in cybercafes before using the unused side of the paper in my office. I also remember conducting many matters at the lower courts in Maiduguri and earning the day's fees. I was regularly briefed minutes before the day's proceedings which were normally conducted in the Hausa language. As you can imagine, I learnt how to think on my feet and had the opportunity to work on my advocacy skill. I did all of this while having it at the back of my mind that I wanted to join the inner bar someday and thus, ensured that while I handled matters that could provide for my immediate needs, I also got the requirements to attain Silk overtime.

3. What was it like journeying to the rank of the inner Bar?

It certainly was not an easy feat to become a Senior Advocate of Nigeria especially when you come from humble beginnings. What made matters even more difficult was the fact that during that time, only about 12 (twelve) lawyers took Silk each year. As many would



know then, it takes years of preparation and commitment to join the inner bar. When I was about 3 (three) years at the bar, I saw the requirements to take silk in a newspaper publication, I instantly went through it, kept it secured and worked towards attaining the rank. This has always informed my advice to lawyers especially young ones to open their mind to and be hungry for information.

The most difficult part was waking up everyday and proceeding to work, burning the midnight candle and using my scarce resources in pursuing cases in the Courts just to make my dream a reality. As you probably would know, in life, you cannot succeed as an island. While I was taking this journey, I met several people who assisted me along the way, one was Hon. Justice Muhammad Kaumi Kolo, of blessed memory who was the Chief Judge of Borno State at the time of my application. He supported me during my Silk application process and physically accompanied me to the Supreme Court in Abuja for my conferment with the rank. Another was Kadi Kaka Shehu Imam. He mentored me when I was a young lawyer in Maiduguri and always

provided me with counselling and advice which is why I have made mentorship one of the cardinal principles of my practice to all without bias for race, creed, gender, religion and circumstances of birth.

4. Sir, you are dressed in full Rivers native attire, what informed the dress pattern?

Smiles...

Co-incidentally, most of my friends at the Bar, both old and juniors are from Rivers State, so I like wearing Rivers attires. I play golf game in Port Harcourt regularly, so in extension, I believe that I am a Rivers man by association. I actually love Rivers attires and of course Rivers people too. However, I am not given to much ethnic or cultural sentiment. I adapt to any culture and dressing code of anywhere I find myself.

5. What specific contributions have you made to the growth of the legal profession?

Permit me to begin by quoting a slightly modified version of a popular phrase, 'charity begins at home although it never ends there.' I have used my rank as the first SAN from the north-eastern region of the country to advance the interest of lawyers from the region and all over the country.

I and my firm have organised a public lecture series which is currently in its 14th (fourteenth) edition to educate lawyers and the public, annually on very contemporary topics germane to legal development, the role of the judiciary, growth of democracy, respect for the rule of law, gender rights and equality and the growth and success of younger lawyers coming behind us. I and my law firm bear all the expenses and ensure all our participants from far and wide, some straight out of university, the law school and most young wigs benefit from the programme. I and the law firm also host the Hon. Justice Chukwudifu Oputa Mentoring and Training

Programme for Young Lawyers – this is a yearly event that I and the firm founded about a decade ago specifically targeted at ensuring that our young lawyers get better at the delivery of quality services to client than we can ever be. (As we say in our culture as Africans it is the prayer of parents that their children do better than them) I began this training programme due to my realisation that the younger lawyers rarely get opportunities to meet with the more experienced lawyers for proper advising and counselling like we had opportunity in the past.

I founded the Janada International Centre for Arbitration and Mediation which is named after my late wife, Mrs. Jinada Joe-Kyari Gadzama. The Centre provides an avenue to conduct out-of-court settlements and it encourages litigants and practitioners to utilize alternate dispute resolution in resolving their disputes. I am also blessed to have 6 (six) children, two of whom have become lawyers and arbitrators and are practising with me learning the ropes with other young people from around the country in a truly convivial but strictly professional environment.

We also by the grace of God founded the Vox Populi Foundation which aims at promoting the well-being of Legal practitioners and the society at large by broadening the discuss space on crucial issues of the day. It provides opportunity for young wigs to share problems, seek solutions and suggest new ways that technology can aid law practise. It may interest you to note that older lawyers have also benefitted from the knowledge of younger lawyers especially in the areas of technology and the law. We intend to deepen this interaction. **I look forward to a future in law practise where young lawyers will be assigned mentors nationwide at no cost to the young ones to ensure that they benefit from wise Counsel, experience and have a listening ear to their often very beginner challenges.** Interactions with such



a mentor or mentors will be aided by technology.

6. In what capacities have you served the NBA Sir?

I have had the privilege by the grace of almighty God to serve our noble profession in numerous capacities. Let me begin by saying that I was the Chairman of the NBA Abuja branch (2002-2004); the Pioneer chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association Section on Public Interest and Development Law (2006-2010); pioneer Council Member of the NBA Section on Business Law under the Chairmanship of Mr George Etomi and where it pleased the membership to elect me as a pioneer Council Member of the NBA Section on Legal Practice under the Chairmanship of Mr Yusuf Ali, SAN.

The NBA have found me worthy to chair the NBA National Electoral Committee in 1998 when T.J Okpoko SAN emerged as the President of the Bar and I was the Chairman of the Conference planning committee in Jos in 2004. As a golfer, which I have also been at the fore front of urging many young lawyers to take up as a spot I am also the pioneer NBA Golf captain.

To add to this modest contribution over the years as a bar man, I have been a member of the National Executive Committee of the NBA which is our highest decision-



making body, for a good amount of years. Currently, although not under the NBA but closely related to it, I am the Chairman of the Mentoring Committee of the Body of Benchers.

7. Are you young lawyer friendly?

I do believe that I am, let me take some time to explain why. Most of the lawyers I work with are young lawyers who are remunerated well, provided interest-free loans and daily lunch. I sponsor my lawyers to attend conferences both locally and internationally. I see myself as a mentor. Currently, I am a Member of the Law Students Association of Nigeria (LAWSAN) Advisory Board, I am the Chairman of the Mentoring Committee of the Body of Benchers for Young Lawyers and Host of the Hon. Justice Chukwudifu Oputa Professional Training and Mentoring Programme.

Yearly, I take in over 10 (ten) corp members from different parts of the country to learn the practice of law under my tutelage. This year, due to the number of corp members in the system, I have about 20 (twenty) working with me. I take in over 20 (twenty) externs from the Nigerian Law School during each session and ensure they are actively engaged in my firm. I also provide mentorship to university students, at the moment, Baze University is

collaborating with my firm to make use of our moot court and obtain work placements free of charge. Young lawyers from Rivers State in the likes of Georgina Okaragba, from Erema in Onelga, Tamunokuro Akuro George Esq. from Okrika and Dr. Orowhuo W. Okocha Esq. from Obio/Akpor all had their tutelage practice under me in my office. By the grace of God, with good health and Gods direction I and the firm will continue to do more for the growth of the profession. I have and will always be a Bar man.

8. Are there things you feel the NBA is not doing properly and ought to redo?

Let me begin by commending the administration led by Mr Olumide Akpata. He is running an administration that is for the benefit of virtually all groups of lawyers. There is no perfect administration and no administration can solve all the issues of the NBA - it requires consistent efforts from succeeding administrations. I believe that the NBA can impact more on the lives of lawyers and the current administration is raising the bar in a lot of areas to the glory of God. I must commend the recent initiative by the President to provide free LawPavilion subscriptions to members but I believe that we can do more in terms of ensuring that we find a solution that ensures that younger lawyers are paid adequately in the face of the changes

in the economy, raising inflation, hustlers taking away the business of lawyers which the present administration is battling and a whole lot of welfare related issues that confront a young lawyer daily, finding ways to ensure that our noble profession is not intruded on by quacks and eliminating the trend of harassment of lawyers by security operatives.

To add, I read a publication credited to Mr Udemezue this year. In it, he restated the core missions of the NBA. Within that publication, he highlighted that the core functions of the NBA are to promote the interest of its members while all others are secondary. I will advise the leadership to continue to put significant effort and resources into ensuring that the interest of lawyers in matters such as obtaining affordable healthcare, providing insurance schemes and other matters that would touch the lives of members are placed as the NBA's number 1 (one) priority and pursued with vigour nationwide. Posterity will certainly remember the leadership of bar that stay on this path.

9. What is your take on the call for the intervention of the NBA with respect to the professional charges, particularly on the billing for preparing land documentations for clients?

This is a highly necessary intervention. We have witnessed situations where clients pay lawyers insignificant sums as fees for services rendered. We have also seen that the cost of virtually everything in the country has skyrocketed. This calls for an upward review of our professional charges is opportune and should be encouraged by all. It should not only stop at the upward review of the charges but ensuring that no fellow lawyer undercuts the profession and setting adequate rules to prevent such.

To reach a consensus on how to implement the enforcement of the profession's minimum charges, we will require townhall meetings nationwide where views will be collected with respect to how best we can translate this concern into reality through workable solutions after obtaining the views of most members of the profession. This way, we will carry most of our colleagues along and the decision reached will have a greater effect on the minds of everyone and the larger society will be put on notice.

10. About six (6) years ago when you attempted to lead the Bar, there was this palpable fear that you were too exposed and independent-minded to lead the Bar as a chief helmsman, was the fear well-founded?

To lead an organisation, one must be exposed and independent no doubt. This is the hallmark of leadership any where in the world so if I am rightly perceived as being exposed and independent of mind then I must have lived up to the basic requirement of training as a legal practitioner which is to possess the ability to stand firm when one is on solid foundation, to preserve and protect the positive values of our profession and the larger society and to ender our self to the survival and progress of lawyers everywhere in Nigeria.

If this is what is whispered about me then I am glad. It is normal as people are entitled to their opinions and viewpoints. I see myself as a person who has been involved in numerous activities of the NBA and someone that understands the issues at the bar and I will continue to give to the best of my ability once the opportunity provides itself service to all irrespective of our view points. But I am sure that you will pray to have a child who will be exposed and have independence of thought for the benefit of the family, the community and the larger society.



11. What do you think accounts for the declining standard of professional ethics and ethos in the legal profession, and what do you suggest should be done to remedy the situation?

To my mind, ethics and ethos are discarded when frustration and lack of confidence in a set of rules are present. Hon. Justice Olabode Rhodes Vivour, JSC (Rtd.) made a speech at the August 27, 2021 Call to Bar Ceremony at Eagle Square, Abuja, wherein he mentioned that 11 (eleven) lawyers had been sanctioned for misconduct. It seems that this number keeps soaring yearly. I do not stand for the non-compliance with our rules but as many commentators have mentioned, I believe the most adequate remedy would be to update our rules as numerous provisions contained in them are not practical at this given time. For example, Legal Practitioners should be permitted to engage in certain types of businesses .Furthermore, the NBA can organise more workshops and training on legal ethics to explain to lawyers why it is essential to avoid misconduct. I concede that there is a general decline in the moral value system but a lawyer should be above board given the standing of the Bar in society, we will continue to work towards ensuring that the bar is constantly reformed in order to bring out the best in us. I must also quickly state for the records that as a body we have more of our

members obeying the rules and procedures than those doing so in the breach. As a bar man no effort is too much in the service of a profession that has given me so much (ie) respect and regards in the eyes of society, life long quality friends both young and old all over the country, a daily bread, the opportunity to provide justice and succor for the parties, the Court and the society and finally one has been at the vanguard of providing probono service to the downtrodden and have also by the grace of good seen the world.

12. Do you think the NBA is doing enough in its avowed role of promoting the rule of law in the society?

The NBA has been active under the current administration in the promotion of the Rule of law. Mr Olumide Akpata and Mr Monday Ubani, the Chair of the NBA Section on Public Interest and Development law have to the best of their abilities stood up against violations of the rule of law in the society and frowned at the abuse of powers especially by government functionaries. In the testament of this, I was recently appointed by the NBA to head its team to challenge the tenure elongation of the immediate past Inspector-General of Police, Mr Mohammed Adamu. The NBA-SPIDEL also speedily organised a webinar examining the indiscriminate grant of ex-parte orders. This is highly commendable where a distinguished panel examined this vexed issue.

These are just a few of the issues amongst many that the current administration have challenged in recent times and one must note that it is within their mandate as the NBA is divided into various sections with clearly defined areas of intervention.

There is always room for improvement and in this regard, I think the NBA can engage in more discussions and if required, initiate suits against necessary stakeholders

when it adjudges that the rule of law has been infringed in any way by persons in authority whose duty it should be to uphold and preserve same. I am a firm believer in the role of the bar in using the instrumentality of the law to check excess of public officers, society is usually better for it as it enables the growth of jurisprudence as well as serve as a check on abuse of power.

13. What reforms do you suggest the NBA does for its electoral process?

Recall that 2016 was the first time the e-voting system was adopted. It has gradually been improved upon and I have faith in the current administration that it would take the system to the next level. I remember that the Akpata administration set up an electoral review committee which was headed by Akintunde Ayodele SAN on Wednesday, September 30, 2020. Memoranda were written and sent. I also drafted one and sent it to the review committee. The committee presented its report at the National Executive Council meeting of the Bar and the same was unanimously adopted.

Permit me to recount, rather briefly, some of the recommendations I think would assist the NBA in reforming its election process. First, the electoral committee to conduct the election ought to be appointed early to ensure it has enough time to conduct the election in compliance with the Constitution of the Association. Secondly, to preserve the sanctity and respect for the office of the President, he/she must work hard towards ensuring that the system promotes justice and the good of all. Third, the candidates should be given access to inspect the information technology infrastructure used before and after the conclusion of the elections.

14. What are your hobbies, Sir?

I am a man of many adventures. I think many people know that I love a good game of golf but I do more

than this. I swim everyday in my house, I take hikes once a while, I enjoy watching football; and I like to do light exercises in the gym and of all I join all NBA organised health activities whenever we attend, weeks, Seminars, conference anywhere around Nigeria

15. As Chairman, Body of Benchers Mentoring Committee for Young Lawyers, what should be the immediate expectations from you.

We have been working round the clock on the need to impact positively on our young lawyers under 7 years at the Bar. We hope to come up with an online training programme for them hopefully in November this year. To us, this is a low hanging fruit and we shall assess ourselves and then move on to several other activities.

16. What other message do you have for the Bar?

Our bar which is the largest in Africa should continue to promote unity amongst our members to achieve the common goal and objective of making the bar and Nigeria at large of great repute. We must rise and face all challenges that may come at us. I have noticed with dismay that lawyers are now used as pawns to ridicule the judiciary. I call on the



Bar to rise against this challenge and refuse briefs that will aim to ridicule the judiciary. It will be beneficial if we have a bar that we can all be proud of. As it is commonly said, the strength of a team is in its weakest link (member). If we all stay united to confront the challenges facing us, we will build a Bar that we will all be proud to associate with.

17 ANY PARTING SHOTS FROM CHIEF JOE KYARI GADZAMA (SAN)?

I have and always will remain a bar man. *“I will look out for and vigorously pursue that which will make the bar better for all and for those coming behind us”*. I have and will remain ever grateful to Almighty God and all the persons who have been instrumental to who I have become and the modest achievements I have made. May the Good Lord bring all younger ones destiny helpers as they strive to find their feet in the one and only respectable profession whose main business is that of preserving and protecting the dignity and liberty of others under a just and human society where the Rule of Law leads.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity.

Other views about Chief J. K. Gadzama, SAN

Orowhuo W. A. Okocha, Esq., PhD

Question: How can you best describe the man Chief J. K. Gadzama, SAN?

Answer: the Chief J. K. Gadzama, SAN is an illustrious Legal Practitioner whose reputation precedes him, so I won't bother with a generic description. His professional accolades and achievements are easily discovered at the click of a button. As I am sure many will now be aware, I cut my teeth in Legal Practice in his Abuja Office from 2008 to 2009, and even though I left to continue my education all those years ago, and subsequently returned to full-time Legal Practice in Port Harcourt, he has continued in his role as a professional mentor, one who is readily available to give advice, and our personal relationship has also been maintained, to the point that he travelled down to Port Harcourt recently to attend my Wedding Ceremonies.

Question: What were your experiences like working under him as a young lawyer.

Answer: My experience in JK Gadzama & Partners, as it was called then, was a memorable one. The lasting impression I got from him was that one's age at the Bar shouldn't serve as a limitation on ambition. I joined the firm as a



NYSC Member, and in one of our first meetings, J.K. Gadzama, SAN pointed out to us (there were 3 Corps members sent to his Firm in that batch), that we were all full-fledged members of the Legal Profession, and that there was to be no special treatment. He would hold us to the same high standards that he held his other Juniors-in-Chambers, and we would be required to deliver on tasks at the same time as them. This left a lasting impression on me, to the point that I am quick to say that competence and age at the Bar are not always synonymous. To summarise, my time with Gadzama, SAN taught me to be bold in my approach to the Profession, and to not shy away from any tasks or responsibilities by sheer virtue of my age at the Bar.

Question: From your view, how is JK Gadzama's relationship with Young Lawyers generally?

Answer: Admittedly, I have not worked professionally in close quarters with the Learned Silk since I left his Firm in 2009, but his approach to young lawyers and work/their responsibilities as described above is one that should be emulated and, as one click of a button might reveal, there are many reports in the media about his generosity towards young lawyers, including but not limited to, sponsoring many events, training sessions and social gatherings for their benefit.

Question: What distinguishing leadership qualities do you know of him?

Answer: On the basis of my brief stint in his Firm alone, the simple act of inspiring and pushing juniors to be bold and courageous in their approach to their responsibilities is a distinguishing leadership ability that must be applauded and emulated.

Thank you.

Chief Joseph Kyari Gadzama, SAN

Over the years - Kingsley Nyesom Chinda

Chief Joseph Kyari Gadzama (SAN) is a legal practitioner that needs no introduction in Legal circles amongst the old and new wig, easily accessible to young lawyers and sociable with his contemporaries and an open and friendly personality who dedicates his time over and over again to the bar. His undying commitment to the growth of the profession can be gleaned from his continued commitment to the mentorship of young lawyers around the country, his support for branches nationwide and his readiness to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning.

As one of our nation's foremost legal minds he remains committed to the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) no matter the circumstance and has from my own experience continued to play a leading role in the progress and evolution of its sections (ie) the Section on Public Interest law, (SPIDEL) Section on Legal Practice (SLP) and Section on Business (Law SBL) amongst so many responsibilities including by the **Body of Benchers as mentoring committee Chairman for young lawyers.**

As a member of my branch (Unity Bar) he remains dedicated to its progress and attends all its meetings. His passion for hard work, his zeal for success and his fervent quest for excellence can be seen in little things like **how many times he corrects a draft of any process, letters, correspondence etc. before he approves same for dispatch.** He is a dependable

coach, a Bar Leader per excellence, and a builder of confidence who has told us many times that true success comes by rising from a fall.

JK as he is fondly called by his mates is an epitome of humility and this every lawyer who comes in contact with him will readily attest to. He is completely detribalized and will always look out for the best in lawyers. He seeks excellence and values excellence. It is to his eternal credit that not a few young lawyers have continued to attend the NBA Annual Conference as well as the International Bar Association Conferences in Places like the United States, Ireland, Japan, Korea etc. on his bill.

Chief is the life of any party he attends and can keep one standing round a cocktail high table the whole night with his knowledge filled jokes about his humble background, his humble beginnings and the baby steps he took in Maiduguri while starting out in legal practice. He remembers events that happened more than 50 years ago while still less than ten years old in school and still keeps in touch with friends and teachers at that level.

Chief is an equal opportunity employer who has trained many who today have become successful in their chosen paths either as Judges at trial and Appellate Courts, Senior



Advocates, Mediators, Arbitrators and notable academicians.

I join so many around the country and beyond to wish him better times he used to always end his sermons with a famous quote from **Aristotle** **“There is only one way to avoid criticism: do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing”**. His slogans is go out and try, learn the lessons and keep trying with God success comes with perseverance. I have continued to live by the creed.

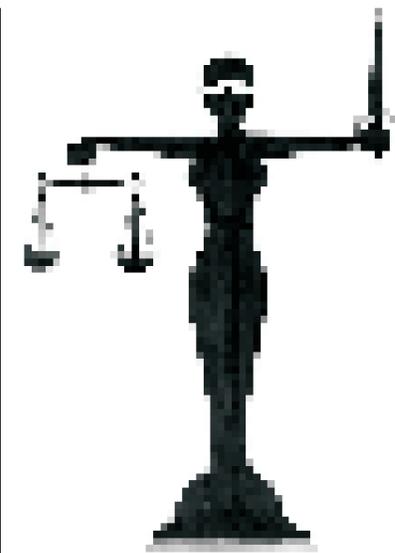
Kingsley Nyesom Chinda, Esq.
Principal Partner,
Chinda N. Chinda & Partners

Again the Judiciary: The Unseen Wounds

Dr. Chukwuma A J Chinwo

It is a pity that in Nigeria we have a society where people show concern only when it pains them or when evil is thrown on their faces and they cannot move in any direction. The only reason the judiciary of Nigeria has been reduced to the level where the Chief Justice of Nigeria, himself a product or beneficiary of the evil of the destruction of the citadel of justice, would summon Chief Judges of seven States of Nigeria and that of the ubiquitous and presumptuous Federal Capital Territory High Court is because, as Chinua Achebe told Karl Meir and the latter made it the title of his book, **THIS HOUSE HAS FALLEN**. God is the foundation of every society. However, to make ordinary man understand how He who is invisible spirit operates, we are told that 'Justice and judgment (law) are the habitation of your (God's) throne and mercy and truth shall go before your face' (Psalm 89: 14).

For too long we have acted as if administration of justice is the exclusive preserve of the judges and magistrates by the fallacy of 'As the Court pleases'. There may perhaps be no greater fallacy in the halls of justice than this most popular phrase echoed at every turn in the court rooms, 'As the Court pleases'. It was originally intended to be a demonstration of the fact that when the judge has decided there is nothing else to be said. It was intended to be a mark of respect for the judge and conclusion of disputation in a court since it is in the interest of all, including litigants, that there should be an end to litigation. It may have been an acknowledgement of the fact that even if the judge is wrong there is



nothing else that can be done in his court by him or any other person than to take it as he has given and not to turn him into a party to the dispute. It may mean putting all the responsibility for a decision and its consequences on the judge. You see, like most clichés, 'As the Court pleases' was evolved as a good servant. It was not intended to be a master.

Unfortunately, 'As the Court pleases' has been turned to a monstrous master. It is has now turned the court hall into a military boot camp, to the knockdown bell of a bazaar sales master. It is beginning to be presented as a licence to kill and a directive to see something, hear something and say nothing. For a nation where people are not trained for the most critical jobs in the land (judges are not trained for the job, mind you), 'As the Court pleases' has become the major tool of intimidation of the faint hearted, protection of the mischievous and distress of the oppressed in the only hall and institution under the control of human beings where a man runs to

with hope that if all other places failed he would receive consolation. The oppressed is told to join even his oppressor and collaborators to say 'As the Court pleases' when he has just suffered glaring injustice which may not be the direct result of the Court's action or inaction. His lawyer who knows or may not have known that some dirty water had passed under the bridge is expected to rise up and not just say 'As the Court pleases' (which could be grudgingly understood) but to praise 'My Lord for the erudite, well considered and learned decision!' Otherwise he would be accused of impudence and impertinence.

Most persons, especially uncaring Nigerians, do not know that lots and lots of persons are passing through terrible times for turning to the Courts. I had a client who I fear may never look at the direction of the Court at Loco in Port Harcourt or anywhere it may be located after his first experience. After suffering at the pleasure of the Honourable Judge and finally getting judgment, he and I, in apparent naivety, rejoiced that our torture was over. It was then I realised that between a judgment delivered by a judge and the reaping of the fruit of judgment lie the most dangerous land mines any litigant would have to jump over. There is the court clerk, court secretary, Assistant Chief Registrar, the inimitable bailiff, the police, the drivers, and others. Most of them never let you pass through their doors, not to talk of doing their duties, without you paying a good percentage of the judgment sum up front. By the time my client suffered all that he must have wondered whether the resort to Court was worth it. Would it not have been better to let the wicked man who

borrowed without paying back go on and struggle with his conscience? At the end he went home disillusioned and we the lawyers were left empty handed.

What Nigerians see are the open wounds in cases where conscience has not only been crushed but threatened. Nigerians hear of that in cases where that terrible class of Nigerians who believe that everyone and everything can be bought off the counter are involved. When the Nigerian politician is involved nothing is sacred and there are very few no-go areas. Those areas where they are prevented from entering; the legs that refuse to open 'like Lekki Toll gate'; and the individuals that refuse to put a price on themselves and refuse to be bought for any price are vilified and called names. They are deprived of even that which is their own and unfortunately most Nigerians agree with the politicians without asking questions. Have you not heard of 'that wicked lecturer', that 'useless judge', that 'so-called man of God', that 'ugly SU girl', that 'over-righteous man', that 'I too sabi accountant', that 'too strict father', and other such tags bandied against persons who believe that the right things should be done and that not everything is for sale, by those who believe that everyone has a price?

But there are much more hidden wounds on Nigerians afflicted every day by the judiciary. Should we continue to keep quiet about them? Should we only wait until we are hit directly? Should we look elsewhere until we hear the cracking sound of the fall of the edifice called judiciary or see fire burning from the temple? To paraphrase the Bible 'shall we continue in sin of afflicting the people with injustice and allowing oppression go on so that we would retain 'the honour and dignity' of an institution whose beauty has been slain on the high places?

Once more I would be the first to make it known to anybody in the world that the judiciary, even in Nigeria and Rivers State in particular, like the Church in Sardis, has some of the finest personalities that anyone can find on this side of eternity. I have seen diligent, humble, sincere, focused, contended, godly, gracious men and women on the Bench as Magistrates and Judges. I have seen a few as para-legal staff of the judiciary. I doff my little hat from my little head for these men and women. In 2001 as Chairman of the Christian Lawyers Fellowship (CLASFON) in Port Harcourt I led my colleagues to institute the first ever Outstanding Judicial Service Award for Judges in Nigeria. When NBA, Port Harcourt branch saw that it was possible they instituted the Best Judges, Best Magistrate, etc, Award. It was an effort to lift up the banner of righteousness and not be party to gossip and rumour-mongering. We were vindicated.

However, the hidden wounds inflicted by the judiciary have begun to fester. Incidentally most of it are not inflicted by the Judges and Magistrates. But the judicial officers have to bear the brunt because they are best placed to nip the tree of evil in the bud. Sometimes, as I may be told, you hear: 'but you never reported'. It seems to me that it is a systemic or institutional connivance and condoning of evil for an institution that has all the powers to investigate and arrest to sit back and blame victims who are not sure of the authority's response for not reporting specific cases when evil is being berated all round. That is what our Nigerian Police Force and other authorities do and today we rank very high in the World Corruption Index. Everyone knows, no one is caught!

When a matter is filed by a person in a Court and it would take months to be assigned to a court but if filed by another it can be heard the same day, hidden wound

has been inflicted. Why should case No 2 be assigned before case no. 1? It is even tolerable in the trial courts. In the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal of Nigeria today, the appeal of C entered in 2010 may not have date while the Appeal of Z filed in April 2021 has been heard, decided and reported! Because C is not a political figure, the child or spouse of a high public official; because he has no name to brandish and perhaps no resources to throw around to get date, his matter would remain in the court's docket until most of the parties involved are dead. Hey, I am not talking of what I do not know of. Odumegwu Ojukwu wrote a book entitled, 'Because I am Involved'. King David was told by the Jebusites that he could only take their city if he could remove the lame, the blind and the halting in the city gate. I wish Justice Simeon Amadi great success in his work as Chief Judge of Rivers State as I wish Justice Tanko Mohammad as Chief Justice of Nigeria but I fear they cannot succeed if they would not step down from their high seats and meet the clerks and bailiffs of court and let them know that any blemish, anything that makes a litigant's heart to bleed further when he should be consoled is a portion of poison on the meal served by the judiciary. Why should a litigant pay N5,000 to N10,000.00 for a bailiff who is paid salary and who claims mileage to serve a process within a judicial division? Why should a Secretary of a Judge be paid humongous amount, if at all (for which I not why) to type the judgment or proceedings of a court? Why should execution of judgment be a great bogey that makes litigants and their lawyers give up on the judiciary and on judgments won?

Why should clerks be allowed to go scot-free when they hide case files or mischievously adjourn cases in connivance with mischievous defendants? Why should judges not create atmosphere whereby lawyers in particular on behalf of

their clients can report to them the malfeasance of their clerks and secretaries and have it rectified? Why should copies of judgments and rulings not be mandatorily and freely given to parties and their lawyers within the period provided by the Constitution or promised by judges and magistrates? Those who are either part of the systemic rot or who want to be in the good books of whoever, while not trying to put the judiciary in the good books of the public, would object to me revealing these unseen wounds. But they have become cancerous and metastasizing. Shall we continue in being 'politically correct' while unspeakable evil abound? God forbid! Unseen wounds!

CHIEF J. K. GADZAMA, SAN AN ICON TO RECKON WITH ~ SAM AIBONI, ESQ.



Before my personal encounter with the Legal Icon Chief JK Gadzama (SAN) in my previous role as an in House Counsel at SHELL, I have heard and researched about him, I stood in awe and excitement about the opportunity to be in the presence of greatness, but my meeting with him left me with an inspiration to follow in his path in private practice, his indept knowledge of the Oil and Gas Industry was rare for an External Solicitor at the time and his simple, amiable and charismatic

personality left a lasting impression till date. His constant mentorship and sponsorship of young lawyers has remained invaluable in my career progression, my advise to young lawyers is not to underestimate the value of mentorship and sponsorship in your journey in the Profession.

Rivers drags FG to Supreme Court over VAT revenue

... Seeks disbandment of A'Court panel that ordered maintenance of status quo

Rivers State Government, through its Attorney-General, has gone to the Supreme Court praying it set-aside the decision of the Court of Appeal that ordered it, River State to maintain status quo on the collection of Value Added Tax, VAT, pending the determination of an appeal lodged by the Federal Inland Revenue Service, FIRS.

The State, in its nine grounds of appeal, is equally praying the apex court to order that the substantive appeal by the FIRS marked CA/PH/282/2021, and all other processes therein, be heard and determined by a new panel of the Court of Appeal.

It maintained that the three-man panel of Justices of the Court of Appeal led by Justice Haruna Tsammani, had in the ruling they delivered last Friday, erred in law when they relied on the provisions of Section 6(6) of the 1999 Constitution and the inherent jurisdiction of the appellate court, to order all the parties to maintain status quo on the VAT dispute. It argued that the Court of Appeal



lacked the powers to restore the parties to the position they were before the judgment of the Federal High Court in Port Harcourt in suit No. FHC/PH/CS/149/2020, which was delivered on August 9, 2021.

It argued that the appellate court panel failed to take into account a decision of the Supreme Court in SHUGABA V. UNION BANK [1999], 11 NWLR (pt. 627), page 459, to the effect "that no court has an inherent jurisdiction (except in extreme circumstances) to set aside the exercise of discretion of another court with regards to order made in respect of application for stay of execution."

The state argued that the Court of Appeal panel erred in law when they wrongly assumed jurisdiction to

entertain on oral application that counsel of the FIRS made for maintenance of status quo by parties in the dispute, despite the fact that condition precedent for the invocation of inherent jurisdiction of the appellate court was not fulfilled by FIRS.

Rivers State contended that the appellate court, by proceeding "to make far-reaching decision," based on the oral application by FIRS, denied it fair hearing.

Consequently, it prayed the apex court to allow the appeal, set aside the decision of the court of appeal on maintenance of status quo, and further dismiss the oral application that was made by the FIRS.

Culled from Vanguard online
15/9/2021

THE RIVERS STATE JUDICIARY GRANTS PARDON TO OVER ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY INMATES FROM THE PORT HARCOURT MAXIMUM CORRECTIONAL SERVICES AS PART OF DECONGESTING THE PRISON.

The Rivers state Judiciary has granted pardon to over one hundred and sixty inmates from the Port Harcourt Maximum correctional services as part of decongesting the prison.

The pardon was inline with the recommendation of the state chief Judge Justice Simeon Amadi to relocate three chief magistrate to the correctional centre to released inmates with minor offences.

The three Chief Magistrates, Chief Magistrate, MENENEN POROMON, Chief Magistrate VICTOR NWEKE and Chief Magistrate ROSEMARY IBANIBO for three days released 46 inmates on 2nd September, Friday, 62 on Monday and 42 Tuesday, u September 2021 which includes 2 females.

Speaking to the released inmates, Chief Magistrate MENENEN POROMON said they are released based on merit due to minor offences that have resulted to over crowding.

He advised those released to stay away from crime, adding that the releases inmate should locate their origin and settle down properly.



Some of the released inmates who spoke to correspondent thanked the chief Judge of the state and promised not to go back to crime.

Recall that the chief Judge of the

state, JUSTICE SIMEON AMADI on 19 of August 2021 pardon 10 inmates and promised to release more during and after the high court vacation.

The chief judge is expected to after the resumption of the high court from annual vacation embarked on another round of goal delivery exercise assuming that many inmates would benefit from the exercise.

On their part some stakeholders in the Administration of Criminal Justice, Legal Community, Human Right Groups also hailed the chief judge for his innovation initiative of assigning Magistrates to hold the special session.

Cc: Ayo Hidayat Odungweru



How J. K. Gadzama, SAN MENTORED ME

~ Prince Chukwudi Oli, Esq.

As a young lawyer looking for a place/office for Legal Practice, I came in contact with Chief J. K. Gadzama, SAN and he absorbed me and gave me the basic training and mentorship I needed as a young lawyer and today, I am now

operating a law firm of my own, courtesy of his quality and unprecedented guidance cum mentorship. I enjoin him to do more for up coming and younger lawyer alike.

CONTROVERSY OVER STATUS QUO:

Rivers, Lagos to collect VAT, not FIRS - SANs

Says A/Court order in favour of states, not FG agency

Controversy at the week end trailed the Court of Appeal ruling which ordered parties in the dispute over the administration of Value Added Tax, VAT, to maintain status quo, as senior lawyers said the ruling does not affect the VAT laws of Rivers and Lagos state governments.

They explained that since the laws made by the two states were already operational and not yet a subject of any litigation, the judgment has no effect on them.

The court order to maintain status quo had been interpreted in several quarters to mean that the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) should collect VAT pending the determination of the suit.

The Court of Appeal sitting in Abuja, had, last Friday, ordered FIRS, Rivers and Lagos states to maintain the status quo on the collection of VAT, pending the determination of an appeal that was lodged before it by FIRS. The appellate court said the order was to preserve the 'Res', subject matter, of the appeal before it. Specifically, it ordered all the parties that have subjected themselves before it to "refrain from taking any action to give effect to the judgment of the Federal High Court", which gave Rivers State government the right to collect VAT revenue, instead of the FIRS.

A three-man panel of Justices of the appellate court, led by Justice Haruna Tsammani, made the order after it deferred hearing of an application Lagos State filed to be joined as an interested party in the matter, till September 16.Lagos

State had through its Attorney-General, Moyosore Onibanjo, SAN, protested against the issuance of an order for the maintenance of status quo, insisting that such order could not be binding on it, since it was yet to be joined as a party in the appeal by FIRS.

Major victory

Rivers State government had, last month, secured a major court victory over the Federal Government in the collection of VAT in the state, and went ahead to enact necessary law and inaugurated agencies for the collection of the tax in the state.

Justice Stephen Pam of a Federal High Court in Port Harcourt, in a judgment delivered on August 9, held that Rivers State government, and not the FIRS, has the right to collect VAT in the state.

Pam, in the judgment, subsequently restrained the Attorney General of the Federation and FIRS (1st and 2nd defendants) from collecting VAT in Rivers and directed the state government to take charge of the duty. Consequently the state House of Assembly passed the VAT Bill which was assented to by Governor Nyesom Wike to become law.

But the Abuja Division of the Court of Appeal ordered all parties that have submitted themselves before the court to maintain status quo ante bellum pending the hearing of an application seeking to stay the judgment of the Federal High Court, Port Harcourt.

However, in conversations with Sunday Vanguard, senior lawyers gave reasons the judgment was not about maintaining the status quo.

Rivers has power to collect VAT - Ozekhome

According to Chief Mike Ozekhome, SAN, the status quo ante bellum was before the breakout of hostilities. His words: "Clearly, the status quo ante bellum was before the breakout of the hostilities.

The hostilities broke out when the FIRS dragged the Rivers State government to court, arguing that it cannot collect VAT based on its law.

The said law was already duly passed and made operational by Rivers State House of Assembly that has the constitutional competency under Section 4 of the Constitution to do so."The FHC, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, also later validated the said law.

The law was already therefore in operation before the FIRS challenged the validity of an FHC judgment, PH, which merely gave it judicial imprimatur. So, the status quo is that it is the Rivers State government that has the power to collect VAT, until perhaps, the Court of Appeal rules otherwise and set aside the FHC judgment.

However, to avoid unnecessary bickering and needless head-on collision between the Federal Government (which owns the FIRS) and the Rivers State government in a matter that is already subjudice, I will advise that both the Rivers State government and the FIRS should both cease hostilities and maintain the status quo until the Court of Appeal finally pronounces on the matter.

"The Rivers State VAT Law was promulgated based on the judgement of the FHC, Port

Harcourt. Not the other way round.

“The Court of Appeal ordered all parties, including the Attorney General of the Federation, the Lagos State Government that had also sought to be joined, to maintain status quo and not to do anything that would affect the judgement of the FHC, Port Harcourt, until the motion for stay of proceedings of the trial court’s judgement was heard.”

Anyone dissatisfied should go to court-Adegboruwa

On his part, Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa, SAN, argued: “The order of the Court of Appeal is only limited to the subject matter of the judgment of the Federal High Court, Port Harcourt.

“The case before the court of appeal has nothing to do with the operation of the Value Added Tax Laws already passed by Rivers and Lagos states.

These laws are not before the Court of Appeal and so, the court is not expected to and cannot make a pronouncement on these laws.

“These laws are already in force and anyone dissatisfied with them should approach the proper court to ventilate his grievance.

“It, therefore, means that these laws will continue to operate notwithstanding the outcome of the appeal pending before the Court of Appeal.

“As of this day, therefore, VAT is expected to be collected by Rivers and Lagos States based on the VAT Laws.

“FIRS cannot collect VAT as it is a judgment debtor and it has been restrained by the Court of Appeal from collecting VAT while the appeal is pending.”

Court didn't ask states to maintain status quo -Aliyu

Also speaking, Yomi Aliyu, SAN, said: “The Court of Appeal did not ask them to maintain any status quo but rather adjourned to allow Lagos State to join the appeal properly. “Since the res cannot be destroyed and it is accountable

monetarily there is no status quo to maintain!

“In any case, the laws in the two states are based on their residual powers and not yet the subject matter of any litigation to declare them null, void and/or ultra vires.”

Appellant shouldn't rejoice yet-Omodele

In his contribution, Yemi Omodele cautioned: “The appellant in the appeal should not be celebrating yet. The entire appeal will be determined very soon.

However, if the appellate court ordered status quo be maintained by the parties; not to do what will affect the substance of the appeal pending its determination, any of the parties in the appeal who is not comfortable with the orders can challenge it at the Supreme Court for clarity purposes and as a precedent.

The fact that the respondents had taken steps in respect of the subject of the appeal before status quo was ordered does not deny any of them the right to challenge the order made at the apex court.”

It's a declaratory judgment-Asemudara

Toeing the same line, Ige Asemudara said: “The court asked the states or the parties to maintain status quo on judicial action and possibly executive action since the disputes are between executive arms and order is a judicial one.

It cannot be an order to maintain the status quo on legislative actions. Once a law is duly passed by the legislature it becomes effective on the day of the assent or the day appointed by the law.

To be certain, the VAT laws of Lagos and Rivers State are not subject to litigation at the moment. Nobody has challenged those laws, so there cannot be status quo order on them.

It is a different thing if the states just began to collect VAT after FIRS lost the case to Rivers State, on the strength of Rivers' victory.

“However, the VAT collection is not on the strength of the case but on the strength of enabling legislation simultaneously passed by Rivers and Lagos State. I also expect His Excellency, Rotimi Akeredolu to sponsor a bill to the Ondo State House of Assembly for VAT collection in my state.

“The passage of the states' VAT laws is not one of the orders made by the Rivers State High Court which can be stayed by the Court of Appeal. It is rather a constitutional enablement long slept upon.

Now, the state assemblies seem to be alive to their legislative powers. Interestingly, Lagos State was not a party to that particular suit at the High Court. So, if you ask Rivers government to stay action on the victory at the High Court, can you ask Lagos to stay action where it was not even a party to the dispute?

“Beyond these, that judgment was a declaratory judgment. The order to maintain the status quo must be in the nature of the injunction. Now that the VAT law of Rivers is passed, can that order affect a concluded act?

“The federal government should rather properly advise itself by disengaging from illegality. It should be considering remitting all the VATs collected since 1999 when the current constitution became effective, to the various states in quantum meruit.”

Judgment favours Rivers-Ubani

A former Vice President of the Nigerian Bar Association, NBA, Monday Ubani, said: “I think the Court of Appeal in Abuja was very specific when it said the party that had a judgment in its favour should maintain the status quo pending the hearing of the appeal before the Court of Appeal.

What this means is that, for now, it is Rivers that got the favourable judgment from the lower court. I think the Court of Appeal specifically granted a stay because the court says the stay is against the person who

has the favourable judgment and it is Rivers that has a favourable judgment in that case.

So, if the court specifically mentions that the party that has the favourable judgment should not do anything pending the hearing of the appeal, that means Rivers is specifically asked to stay execution of that judgement until the appeal is decided.

“Similarly, President of African Bar Association, AfBA, Mr. Hannibal Uwaifo, said: “Rivers State is right to go ahead with the collection of VAT. That is the right thing to do. It is a constitutional matter.”

VAT law in Lagos Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State, last Friday, signed the state VAT Bill into law less than 24 hours after it was passed by the state House of Assembly.

A statement by Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Gbenga Omotoso, said: “The Governor signed the bill for a law to impose and charge VAT on certain goods and services at about 11.45 am today, after returning from an official trip to Abuja.

By this act, the Bill has now become a Law.” The state also got its request to join the legal battle against FIRS on collection of VAT approved. A three-man panel of Justices of the Court of Appeal in Abuja granted the permission.

Also on Friday, Rivers Governor Wike inaugurated Tax Appeal Commission as a follow-up to the signing into law of the VAT Bill in the state.

Chief J. K. Gadzama, SAN

AT A MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME WITH YOUNG LAWYERS

— TAMUNOKURO AKURO GEORGE, ESQ. —

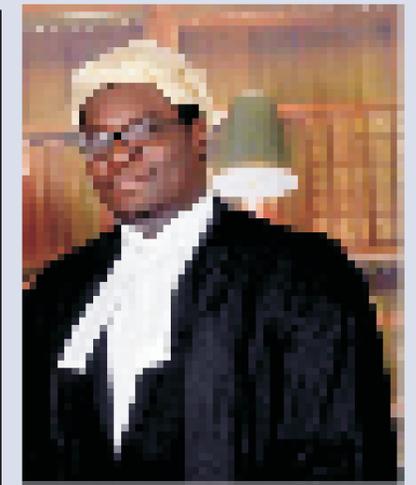
Chief J. K. Gadzama, SAN is an inspiration to young lawyers.

1.) Chief Joe Kyari Gadzama is an institution of Nigerian law, an icon and inspiration for many of us to look up to and be inspired. It is important that those of us climbing the legal ladder have people like that to remind us that with hard work and determination there is little that cannot be achieved. An idea embodied by this gentleman who rose from the humblest of beginnings in Kaduna to the dizzying heights which he now occupies.

Even more so than this, he is a fine gentleman with a rather large heart and it has been an absolute pleasure getting to know this man and be awed and inspired by him from a close distance. I certainly look forward to many more years of inspiration and mentorship not only to me but to other Young Lawyers.

2.) I have a little experience working with him and it has been a rather enjoyable experience. As a young lawyer, it is always expedient to have a man of that capacity and reputation take any kind of interest in you and be willing to delegate important roles to you in order to enhance your confidence and self-belief exponentially. He is accessible and ready to offer answers should questions be had. In all, one has to say that working under him has been an opportunity I am grateful for and wish to continue for a long time to come in any form I could lend myself to.

b.) As to his relationship with young lawyers, he can boast a law practice larger than most with branches across different cities of the country with the bulk of



the practitioners in his employ being young lawyers. As much as I can't speak for every young lawyer, but my personal experience has shown that Chief JK Gadzama is always willing to mentor and teach both young and older lawyers.

3.) As for his leadership qualities, I must say that they are many and varied.

He is an intensely brilliant, hardworking and ambitious gentleman as well as talented orator very capable of getting his message across succinctly. In his paraphrased words, he possesses a desire to give back to the Bar and the profession that has given so much to him. There is also a sense of true nationalism with a firm comprising lawyers and support staff from every region of the country, something he takes pride in.

In closing, I will say the man, J.K. Gadzama SAN, is not only a truly successful legal practitioner with a robust and storied practice but also a fine individual whose company I can say I personally enjoy and one in which I have found a mentor and a relationship I hope to maintain for many years to come.

Nigerians Will Continue To Look Up To The Judiciary For Succour

NBA President, Akpata

Says Peace Is Not The Absence Of War But The Presence Of Justice

*Condemns The Attitude Of Lawyers Who Are Been Used By Politicians As Tools To Bring The Profession To Disrepute

*Calls On Courts To Do Everything Within Its Powers To Forestall Future Attempts To Ridicule Our Justice System

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) has said, it would do everything to protect the dignity of the Bench and indeed, the legal profession in the country.

The President of the NBA, Olumide Akpata disclosed this on Monday in a message to a ceremony to mark the 2021/2022 legal year of the Court of Appeal, held in Abuja.

He lamented how politicians, aided by the conduct of some lawyers, appear to be bringing disrepute to the courts in their battles for political supremacy.

Read the full address below:

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT, NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, OLUMIDE AKPATA ESQ, AT THE NEW LEGAL YEAR CELEBRATION AT THE COURT OF APPEAL HEADQUARTERS, ABUJA-FCT, ON SEPTEMBER 13, 2021.

Protocols

My Lord, the President of the Court of Appeal

My Lords, Justices of the Appellate Courts

My Lords, Judges of the various High Courts

Learned Senior Advocates of Nigeria

Distinguished Colleagues

Members of the Press

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with great delight and a high sense of responsibility that I accept the invitation of Your Lordship, the President of the Court of Appeal, My

Lord Hon. Justice M.B. Dongbam-Mensem, to deliver an address at the 2021 legal year formalities. I thank your Lordship for extending this invitation to the Bar and more importantly, fostering the bar-bench relationship. For our part (the Bar), we will continue to do everything to protect the dignity of the Bench and indeed, the legal profession at large.

The Legal Year celebration is a tradition that dates back to antiquity. In other words, legal year celebrations have been traced to have commenced in England in 1897 and has become a tradition of Courts in jurisdictions that owe their origin to the English Common Law. In the new year celebrations in England, judges adorn their red ceremonial attire and take a two miles' walk from Temple Bar to Westminster Abbey for the solemn assembly of 700 guests where judges seek the help of the Divine for guidance and strength. The celebration is not just a processional walk, it also a rare opportunity for lay-men to see the judges outside the strict and fearsome corners of their Courts. I dare say it usually affords judges that opportunity to feel the pulse of the public outside their hallowed chambers.

My Lords, as the head of the Nigerian Bar Association, not only will I most warmly welcome your Lordships back from a deserved rest during the vacation, I am also specially congratulating my Lord, The President of the Court of Appeal, for this initiative of a maiden of the Court of Appeal legal year ceremony. I believe this will be a tradition that has come to stay.

It is no longer news that the nation now grapples with challenges that would hardly have been imagined twenty years ago. Insecurity pervades every corner of the nation. The institutions of the State are weakened and are almost caving in under the pressures and vicissitudes of socio-political unrests. The brutal use of force by those entrusted with the executive powers of the state,



and the tendencies of men of means to corrupt the polity and to pervert the cause of justice has clearly demonstrated to us all that no one is safe if there is no justice. Marthin Luther King Jnr has once reminded us that peace is not the absence of war but the presence of justice. I must therefore emphasize that Nigerians will continue to look up to the Courts for hope in the face of despair and justice in the midst of uncertainties. Our Courts are therefore entrusted with a part to play in restoring the peace of the nation.

In more specific terms, it is particularly disturbing how politicians, aided by the conduct of some of our colleagues, appear to be bringing disrepute to the hallowed chambers in their battles for political supremacy. Their target is to make a mockery of an institution that must always inspire confidence, trust and fairness. In particular, what may appear to be the ignoble roles and potential judicial rascality of some of Judges in the internal political crises of a major political party and the primary elections of a State few weeks ago, were eyesores better imagined than experienced. We woke up nearly every day to the news of another order on the subject of the leadership of a political party in a manner that smacked not only of the possibility of forum shopping but also of suspected compromise of such mushrooming injunctions. At this juncture, I must say and boldly too that the blame does not only rest at the desk of the Judex; some senior members of the Bar also allowed themselves to be used as purveyors of abuse of Court processes and perversion of justice.

to be continued from next edition

PORT HARCOURT LAW SCHOOL CAMPUS WILL BE THE BEST IN NIGERIA- PROF. CHIROMA

The director general, Nigerian Law School, Professor Isa Chiroma has expressed optimism that the new Port Harcourt campus of the institution will be the best in the country.

Chiroma made the assertion when he paid a working visit to inspect ongoing civil construction work at the Nabo Bekinbo Graham-Douglas campus of the Nigerian Law School in Port Harcourt on Sunday.

The director general accompanied the Governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Ezenwo Wike to assess progress of work at both the Nabo Graham Douglas campus, Rumueme and staff quarters at New Government Residential Area, Port Harcourt.

He expressed gratitude to the State government for the intervention to build and deliver the Port Harcourt campus in order to help address the challenge of inadequate lecture and accommodation space for the ever increasing number of students

seeking to acquire vocational legal training at the current campuses of the Nigerian Law School in the country.

"The last time we were here was when the ground breaking ceremony took place, and today there is massive construction going on and there is progress. I want to thank His Excellency and the good people of Rivers State for this progress."

Chiroma, who observed that the teeming rainy season in Rivers state has slowed down the pace of work, noted that the amazing aspect of the project is that the quality of materials used for the raft foundation at the Nabo Bekinbo Graham-Douglas campus is world class.

"The kind of materials used with what we have seen on ground, it is unimaginable, it is excellent. I can assure you that the problem we will be having is about our students, who will prefer to be posted to this place with what I have seen."

"That is the battle we are going to be faced with. But, I can assure you that all our Law School campus are the same, but with the development going on here, it is going to be a problem for us to decide who comes to Port Harcourt. From what I have seen it is going to be the best."

Facilities under construction at the Port Harcourt campus will comprise 14 structures including 1500 capacity classroom blocks, hostel blocks, students multipurpose hall, 16 units 3-bedroom flat staff quarters with swimming pool, gymnasium and lawn tennis court.

Other facilities are, library, moot court/law clinic building, sick bay, administrative block, cafeteria and sporting facilities for students.

Kelvin Eberi
Special Assistant (Media) Rivers State Governor

September 26, 2021

GEORGINA ENOCH OKARAGBA: CHIEF GADZAMA, SAN HAS CONFIDENCE AND LOVE FOR YOUNG LAWYERS

After joining the legal profession, it has always been my dream to work under the learned Senior Advocate in the person of Chief J-K Gadzama SAN. After one failed attempt, at God's divine time, just before my marriage I was thinking of where to apply because I would be relocating to Maiduguri afterwards and of course the first choice on my list was J-K Gadzama LLP.

I was able to join the lawfirm after a series of interviews and this was a big dream come through for me. It's the confidence the learned SAN has in me that's outstanding. This clearly shows the love and

confidence he has for young lawyers like myself. I currently head the Maiduguri office and I couldn't be more grateful for the rich experience I am getting from this role when looked in terms of legal roles, administrative roles etc Including been sponsored to various conferences across the nation, flights and every other thing you could think of fully paid for. This he does for all the young lawyers as we take turns in attending the various NBA sessions. The SBL Conference I attended enabled me to interact with other young lawyers in technology/commercial law like myself.



The learned silk will always encourage us to innovate, renovate and interact to meet up with the current tools in the profession. That way we do not fade out but remain relevant.

Georgina Enoch Okaragba