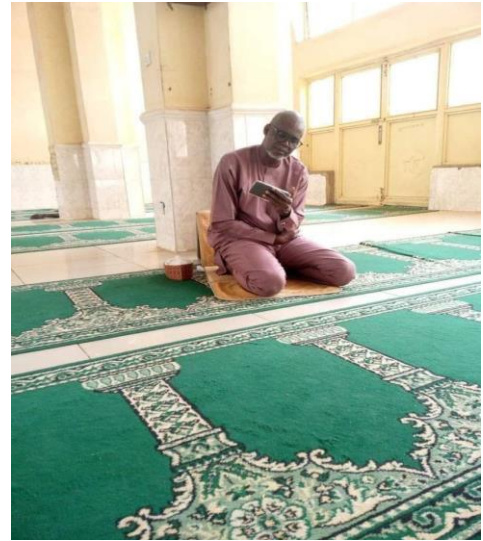


***Cheerio, Bilbis, we will all miss you at
Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University,
Sokoto***

Tributes are usually paid to great leaders and we have had great leaders at Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto, the greatest strength of Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto is that it has always had honest and dedicated vice-chancellors who have strived within the circumstances they found themselves to make the University better. May the almighty Allah reward them abundantly however, one is compelled to write a tribute to **Professor Lawal Suleiman Bilbis**, the outgoing vice-chancellor, because he has been astounding, he dared to venture into areas of development that other leaders have either overlooked or were considered infeasible ventures. This is despite the prevailing global economic downturn. Another reason is his vision for the academic standing of the University. He strived to improve not only the physical structure of the University but also the intellectual output of the University.



Bilbis took over the leadership of the University at a difficult time. The global COVID-19 pandemic was the first challenge that put his leadership skills to the task, he not only responded to the challenge within the University head-on but also reached out to the Governments of Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara States to offer technical advice to highlight peculiarities of our locality within the framework of the



National Response Plan.

Then came the eight-month industrial action of all the staff unions in the University and the general economic downturn. Routine expenditure, for essential services, skyrocketed and the value of the funds at hand depreciated, meanwhile,

the students were away for eight months and were expected to resume and complete the session. That challenge was unprecedented, but the ingenious and resourceful leadership skills of Prof. Bilbis made it as if nothing was wrong.

The way Prof. Bilbis identified the infrastructural, human resource, and academic expansion needs, in the last four years has demonstrated his depth of reasoning, power of analysis, and a sense of responsibility. The perimeter fencing of the University and Senate building are two infrastructural projects that have defied solutions in the last thirty years, Bilbis took the bull by the horns, and significant progress has been made in both projects. Many internal roads have been rehabilitated, making the University a more conducive and aesthetic learning environment.

The greatest strength of Professor Bilbis is not in the physical structures he has been able to accomplish, it is his vision for the ideals of an academic institution. Staff members have attracted more research grants in the last four years than ever before. More linkages have been established for collaborative research than ever before. The output of many of the research centers has improved, and many of the research centers have gained recognition in and outside the country; the Center for Urology and Nephrology has become a Center of Excellence and a lot of research and training in urology is currently going on, it is now a leading center for intersex research and training in this Country. The Center for Advance Medical Research is gradually *answering its name*, this is a result of the zestful and highly skilled young men and women, Professor Bilbis has painstakingly assembled at the Center. The center has recently developed a candidate vaccine for coronavirus, and work is currently going on at the center to develop a vaccine for Lassa Fever. This development is significant for two reasons, it has established the base for vaccinology research in the Center and has attracted many young men and women to develop an interest in molecular biology. Another initiative currently being incubated is to create a Center for Infectious Diseases, perhaps called “One Health Institute”.

Professor Bilbis has been able to promote team spirit among intellectuals in the University, he has been able to motivate younger academics to dream and deliver. His counsel, to younger academics, has always been “Research for Development”, “begin with the end in mind” and “What can you bring out of your research”, as a result of this vision many natural products have been patented by researchers in the University. What else should an academic institution be? *Alhamdulillah* it’s been great for the intellectual community at UDUS.

‘Attitude is everything’, kindness is an attitude for Professor Bilbis, I remember 25years ago, one of my mentors, Professor Friday Okonofowa at the University of Benin, described Prof. Bilbis as a ‘Detribalized Nigerian’ that was when he served as a member of the governing council of that University. Professor Bilbis is an altruist to the core, but what I admire most in him is his sense of justice, I know several people who were malevolent to him but when he had the opportunity to take back his coin, he instead was kind to them to the extent of what they don’t even deserve

Our fervent prayer for Professor Bilbis is, may Allah ta a la accept his humble efforts and make them a source of inspiration to others. May Allah ta a la continue to spare him life in good health, sound spirit and with a loving heart. May Allah guide his future endeavors,

we also pray that Allah will guide those saddled with the responsibility of selecting the next vice-chancellor with the wisdom to know the right thing, the will to do what is right and the strength to endure.

Dr. Ibraheem Omar

Director, Medical Services

Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto

July 10, 2024