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British politician praises Abacha

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Shakespeare's dictum that all the good things that people do are buried with them was disproved in London at the 11th Gathering of Africa's Best (GAB) awards when the late general Sani Abacha was almost made a saint by a British politician, Mr Mackie Sheik.

Mr Sheik, a former deputy mayor of London Borough of Southwark, heaped praises on the former Nigerian military head of state for the 'saviour' role he played in the Sierra Leonean civil war under the aegis of ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

In his remarks after being presented with the GAB award in the category of politics, Mr Sheik said, but for Abacha's timely intervention in the conflict, Sierra Leone would have disintegrated as a country.

"Abacha is the saviour of Sierra Leone and we are grateful to him and to Nigeria for playing the 'big brother' role to rescue our country from the throes of civil war," said Mr Sheik, who is originally from Sierra Leone.

"Abacha may be evil in Nigeria; but in Sierra Leone, he is a hero, almost a saint", he said, adding that some landmarks in the country, including a popular street have been named after him in appreciation of the crucial role he played in the history of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Sheik described politics as a delicate profession as "dealing with people is the most difficult task" in the fields of human endeavour, and thanked the organizers of the award for recognizing him as worthy to receive the award.

The Daily Trust reports that some other recipients of the award include **Yvonne Washington-Turay**, an African-American, for her contributions in health and social welfare in Africa; Tsega Gebreyes, for strategy and development; Pauline Long, for community service; and Tokunbo Kotoye, for entrepreneurship.

In his speech, the founder and chief executive of GAB awards, Femi Okutubo noted that many Africans are excelling in numerous areas of human endeavour, but lamented the negative portrayal of Africa and Africans in the world media.

"We have always maintained that Africa is truly blessed and that the many negative reports about Africa that dominate the media are not a true representation of who we are", he stressed.

"The world at large is looking at Africa as the blessed continent that needs to move to even greater heights in spite of all odds," he said, pointing out that the GAB award was instituted to recognize and celebrate Africans who excelled in their respective areas of endeavour. (Ends)