

**SPEECH BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT ADAMA  
BARROW,  
AT THE OFFICIAL INAUGURATION OF  
THE LOT ONE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF  
THE GAMBIA FARABA BANTANG  
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

**02 MARCH 2024**

Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science, and Technology,  
Honourable Cabinet Ministers,  
Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,  
National Assembly Members,  
Our Esteemed Partners and Supporters,  
Senior Government Officials and Service Chiefs,  
Chairperson and Members of the UTG Governing Council,  
Vice-Chancellor and UTG Staff,  
The Governor, West Coast Region,  
Distinguished Personalities,  
Residents of Faraba and Pirang,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the saying goes, “all is well that ends well.” After years of hard work, we have finally overcome huge challenges to gather here to inaugurate Lot One of The University of The Gambia (UTG) Faraba Banta Campus Project.

This is the story of a long journey to provide the faculty and students of our national pride a permanent campus; a campus where they can focus on educational pursuits without having to worry about where to hold classes, where to access resource materials, or where to utilise suitable equipment that enhance learning.

At last, after thirty-four years of existence, the UTG now has a permanent home. The bitter experience of students trekking to and from rented halls and makeshift classrooms or, sometimes, attending classes under trees is now history.

We thank and praise Allah, the Almighty for this ground-breaking achievement.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At its recent Summit, the African Union recognised 2024 as the Year of Education and renewed its commitment to setting up an education system aligned with advanced socio-economic development.

Great and appropriate as this declaration is for the African continent, my government had already paid attention to the intricate link between education and socio-economic development and had already reflected this in our national development plans.

While the declaration will strengthen our resolve in this endeavour, these magnificent university structures will not only add to the glamour and performance of the UTG as a learning centre to reckon with on the continent, but also complement the other laudable initiatives in the education sector.

With all these sector developments and successes, it is certain that, as stipulated in the YIRIWA Plan - 2023-2027, my government is taking giant strides towards attaining the country’s post-secondary education transformation agenda.

Given the urgent need to boost youth employment and fight poverty, the Government has boldly embraced a robust transformation strategy for the higher education system.

This new strategy is being piloted at the University of Applied Sciences, Engineering, and Technology (USET) through a World Bank Project of the Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence. Chiefly, the strategy has innovation and entrepreneurship components embedded in three engineering programmes.

Besides the new and upgraded tertiary institutions to provide university education and training, Government has also procured state-of-the-art equipment to support teaching and learning. Some of those items were unveiled during my last Meet-The-People Tour.

To sustain the programmes, we are training more Gambians at PhD level and will refocus subsequent projects to supporting this drive.

I call on the relevant educational institutions to work with the Accreditation Authority for compliance and implementation of this policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, to augment skills training, my administration is determined to establish well-resourced TVET Centres in all the regions of the country.

The centres will be linked to USET. As planned, two TVET Centres of Excellence, a multi-purpose centre in Ndemban, and one on Agribusiness in Sapu will be established through World Bank support.

Together with USET, the Centres will be supported with Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hubs. This is enough evidence of how serious we are and how far we have gone towards transforming education and training in The Gambia.

Because there is an obvious link between research and higher education, we will open, as part of the ceremony, a resource library to serve as a critical enabler of the education process on this campus.

The library is expected to bring the UTG closer to other universities and research institutions in the greater South and the rest of the Global Research and Education Community.

In opening the library, we are facilitating access to countless research and instructional materials for the UTG community. As a pool of knowledge and in recognition of the length and quality of service of the late Vice President in the education sector, the centre is hereby named **Dr. Badara Alieu Joof Library**.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, the UTG is advised to take the lead in curricular reform to make sure that education provision is responsive to the development needs of the country and beyond.

My administration recently commissioned a consultancy to review the UTG curriculum through the Faraba Banta Project. In this connection, I ask Management to implement the report submitted by the University of Ibadan and to ascertain that entrepreneurship and innovation are imbedded in your training package.

Distinguished Personalities,

This aside, the Government has developed innovative financing mechanisms for post-secondary education and research.

We have also approved the establishment of three funding mechanisms to support development projects of tertiary and higher education institutions, fund research and innovation programmes, and increase access opportunities to affordable post-secondary education and training through a Students' Loan Scheme.

Noting that higher education is a sure path to sustainable development, we encourage our development partners to collaborate with us and support this human capital formation process via these initiatives.

I plead that we accelerate this development drive so that what we missed in the past is acquired in the shortest possible time.

For this reason, despite the numerous implementation issues encountered along the way, we ensured at all costs that this UTG campus project took off ground in 2017. I am grateful that, through the Ministry of Higher Education, we successfully engaged our donors to absorb the Government's contribution to the project and split the package into two Lots.

This is why we are inaugurating Lot One. In addition to the library, it consists of the four schools of Business and Public Administration, Arts and Sciences, Education, and Information Technology and Communication. We will lay the foundation stone for this Lot shortly.

The University Community is advised to take proper care of this magnificent campus. It is a national duty to ensure that Government structures and programmes are sustained by all implementing agencies. This is civil behaviour and courtesy towards society.

To promote such virtues, we hold the University responsible for transmitting its core values of knowledge, truth, and development, as well as preparing the students sufficiently to contribute to national development.

On behalf of all Gambians, I thank our partners, IsDB, Kuwaiti Fund, BADEA, Saudi Fund, and OFID, for taking this long journey with us. We thank you all for your patience and trust in The Gambia and look forward to working with you on the Conditional Package. To recall, this package takes on board the School of Medicine and Allied Health Science and its programmes, such as Medicine and Surgery, Dentistry, and Pharmacy. To this effect, the Ministers of Finance and Higher Education are tasked to mobilise the necessary resources.

Ladies and gentlemen, sincere gratitude is due to the Pan-African Consulting and Engineering Agency for their excellent consulting services, PCU, and Shapoorji Pallonji Engineering and Construction for the imposing structure before us and its state-of-the-art facilities.

The Honourable Minister of MoHERST and his Team have been instrumental in ensuring that Lot One is successfully delivered, so I thank them immensely.

Hopefully, we shall complete Lot Two next year. It consists of the Chancery, the Faculty of Law, and the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences.

As hosts of the UTG family here, we are thankful to the Governor's Office and the communities of Faraba and Pirang for their support and understanding.

The Brighter Future and MRC Holland Foundation will very soon begin construction of the dormitories for both students and staff. Their philanthropy is truly formidable; hence every Gambian ought to remain grateful to them.

To our other partners, namely the US Government, the European Union, the Chinese Government, the Government of South Korea, the World Bank Group, the Republic of Turkiye, UNESCO, and all those involved in our educational transformation endeavour, The Gambia Government, through my Office, expresses its sincere gratitude.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I now invite you to join me in officially inaugurating Lot One of the UTG Faraba Banta Campus Project.

Thank you for your attention.