SPEECH DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY MAI-LAM DIKKO UMARU RADDA, PH.D. DURING THE FAREWELL CEREMONY OF THE 68NO. STUDENTS SPONSORED BY GOVERNMENT TO STUDY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND BIOTECHNOLOGY AT PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA, HELD ON TUESDAY 10th SEPTEMBER. 2024, AT THE PRESIDENTIAL BANQUET HALL. GENERAL MUHAMMADU BUHARI HOUSE KATSINA

Protocols

All praise be to Allah most gracious, most merciful.

2. It is with great pleasure that I address you this morning to yet another historic occasion where we are witnessing, for the second time, a farewell ceremony for the departure of 68 number students sponsored by Government to study 2 different courses at China Universities. The convergence of top Government officials, parents, students and other wellwishers at a forum of this nature is of great significance to the history of this Administration as it gives us the opportunity to brief our talented youths who are departing to China to study Artificial Intelligence and Biotechnology. Today we are going to handover to the prospective students admission letters and other travelling documents, preparatory to their departure for this important educational journey.

3. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my belief that posterity will judge our actions towards the betterment of the living standards of the citizens of the State. Like I have mentioned at the occasion of the departure of 1st Batch of the sponsored students, this Special Foreign Scholarship Programme was initiated as part of the concerted effort of this administration to provide opportunities to talented students from public schools to study more competitive courses like their colleagues who attended the private schools.

4. Under this programme, we identified the most critical sectors requiring manpower development and to sponsor talented youths to study courses relevant to needs of the State. It may be recalled that during the 1 ST Batch of

the program, 41 number students were sponsored to study MBBS with a view to addressing manpower gap in the Health Sector. Furthermore, the initiative is in line with our vision to revitalize the healthcare sector for improved life expectancy of our people as we promised during our electioneering campaign.

5. I am pleased to inform you that 34 number students would study Al at Xi'an Shiyou University and another 34 number students would study Biotechnology at Xuzhou University of Technology. The students were selected from each of the 34LGAs, in the ratio of one for each of the courses. The selection criteria remained the same as that of the MBBS course and only students from the public secondary schools were considered for the Scholarship.

6. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, parent and students, we selected these courses based on pressing manpower need in some critical sectors of the State. In this regard, the selection of Artificial Intelligent course conforms to the cotemporary trend of Information Technology where various aspect of human Endeavor’s are now digitalized, including E-governance, innovation, creativity etc. Therefore the Al students' on completion of the course will generally provide the needed manpower to the State Government, particularly to be part of staff of ICT Directorate, to leverage on information technology to transform the public service and create economic opportunities for the betterment of lives of the citizenry. Whereas, the Bio-technology students' would make significant impact in transforming the agricultural sector especially in hybrid seeds production and green-plant technology which is in tandem with the current effort of our Administration to revolutionize the sector. On graduation, the students would also assist in areas

of alternative sources of energy and environmental conservation, among others.

7. I must confess that the just concluded nationwide protest on the state of the nation has further exacerbated our determination to empower the teaming youths in the State, as we have seen the reality of the situation at hand. You will all agree with me that for us to address this ever rising youth-restiveness, we must not only ensure easy access to quality education for our youths, but also empower them economically. Agriculture is the major source of economic livelihood to our populace, as such we have developed a plan of action for engaging our youth into agriculture to provide employment to them and enhance food security.

8. It is against this backdrop that I have undertaken a foreign trip to China alongside some relevant Government officials. The visit afforded us the opportunity to among others met with manufacturers of farming equipment and tools that would be used in modernizing agriculture in the
State. In a few weeks to come, we are going to unveil our take-homes from China which are aimed at harnessing the agricultural potentialities of our dear State.

9. As we are today celebrating the departure of the 68 number students sponsored under the joint sponsorship of the State and Local Government Area Councils, I strongly belief that Government will immensely benefit from these unique professional courses most especially in our renewed efforts to revitalizing the agricultural sector in the State.

10. I am happy to inform you that the scholarship is a complete package comprising of partial tuition fees, accommodation, health insurance, monthly upkeep and book allowances, which has been paid in full to the earmarked institutions by the state Government. We have also taken care of all their travelling expenses including international passport and visa processing. In fact parents were not requested to pay for a dime throughout the selection process, travelling arrangements and students stay in China for the duration of their studies.

11. I must acknowledge the effort of the Coordinating Committee under the Chairmanship of His Excellency, the Deputy Governor Mallam Faruk Lawal, HCIB for working tirelessly in ensuring the success of the scholarship programme I would also commend the Committee Members for handling this all important State assignment strictly based on merit selection process.

12. Let me at this juncture congratulate the students for being selected to pursue these very important and relevant courses that would in a near future have a significant impact on the socio-economic wellbeing of our citizens. You must therefore remain steadfast to your study so as to finish within the stipulated duration of each programme I urge you to be good ambassadors of Katsina State and avoid any action or inaction that would tarnish the image of the State and Nigeria at large in the foreign land.

13. Government has invested heavily on you with the hope that you will graduate and come back to serve the good people of Katsina state whose resources were expended on you to pursue this noble courses. I wish you safe trip to your institutions located at different provinces in China, and as well pray for your successful and accomplished academic career.

14. It is pertinent at this juncture to advice the parents of the Students to be in constant touch with them so as to ensure that they embrace their studies fervently. It is to be noted that Government has devised measures to checkmate the students in foreign land, and we will be having periodic reports on both their academic and moral performance. We further agreed with the Universities that students who failed to meet the academic standard of the University will be substituted with other competent candidates.

15. Finally, while wishing you Allah's guidance and journey mercies, I wish to once more thank you all for witnessing this epoch making event. May Allah bless us amen.