Speech by H.E. Mr Rajkeswur Purryag, GCSK, GOSK, President of the Republic of Mauritius, on the occasion of the Celebrations of the 60th Anniversary of the Rose Hill Transport held on Friday 4 July 2014, at 18 00 hrs at La Citadelle, Port Louis.

Mr. Sidharth Sharma, Managing Director, Rose Hill Transport

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening!

I am pleased to join you on this special occasion!

Special, because 60 years of dedicated and unwavering service to the community, especially to the inhabitants of lower Plaine Wilhems, needs to be celebrated with pomp and fervor.

On this auspicious occasion, I wish to congratulate and pay tribute to the Founding Fathers of the Rose Hill Transport for their contribution to the development of the bus transport system in Mauritius.

As you know, transport systems occupy a prominent place in the economic and social development of a country.

No country can successfully pursue its social and economic development without an efficient, reliable, affordable and sustainable transport system.

If our country has witnessed such an impressive level of growth, that is also due to the development of our road transport facilities including the infrastructural network.

To-day, it is easier to commute from one place to another because our public transport provides for inclusive mobility across the country for all our citizens indiscriminately.

Without buses, many of our citizens, especially at the lower rungs of the ladder, students, and the elderly would not be able to move around.

Buses indeed perfectly complement other transport modes by taking commuters and travelers from their point of departure to their final destination.

Many of you present here will surely recollect the good old days when people, particularly those living in the rural areas, would walk long distance to move from one place to another because of lack of transport facilities or else they would spend the night at the visitors’ place and return home the next day.
Our school children were also not spared from such difficulties, as they had to walk long distances to reach their school.

To-day, thanks to the vision of people like Juggarnath Goburdhun, and many others, the bus transport system has improved considerably.

There are at present five major bus companies operating in Mauritius as well as some 800 individual bus owners grouped in around 14 Bus Owners Cooperative Societies.

I am told that there is a total of 1,725 buses that provide transport service throughout the island, of which 55% are operated by the bus companies.

I have therefore no doubt that in Mauritius the bus transport service will continue to play an important role for the conveyance of the general public for many more years to come.

But as any other industry, the bus industry should also evolve, especially in the face of changing customer needs and aspirations for more comfortable bus service.

That’s why we need a bus transport system that provides high quality service in terms of convenience, at regular intervals, accessibility, reliability, comfort, safety, speed and above all, clean.

Good management is also of overriding concern.

And here, I would like to place on record the excellent management and operational qualities of Rose Hill Transport.

If the company has successfully weathered many difficult economic situations in the past, that is largely due to the professionalism of its management and its Board of Directors.

Rose Hill Transport is to my mind the flagship of the bus transport industry.

Also, it is an excellent example of quality and reliable service to its customers.

It has left no stone unturned to improve, innovate and to move ahead with time.

I am glad to learn that the company is the first bus operator in Mauritius to avail of the Bus Replacement Mechanism introduced by Government recently.

I have also noted that the company has ordered a new fleet of 18 semi-low floor buses.

And I understand seven such buses have already arrived and are being commissioned.

Such initiative is certainly in line with the vision of Government to improve the overall bus transport systems in Mauritius.
As you know, our bus transport system has been very much in the limelight recently, particularly as a result of some serious accidents involving buses.

Very often, there have been public outcries on the safety and roadworthiness of buses.

There are also cases of dangerous driving practices, pollution and a tendency to have too much service on profitable routes and virtually no service on non-profitable routes.

All these portray a bad image of the bus industry and reflect poorly on the bottomlines of bus companies which are to provide a good transport service to its customers.

I recognise that investment in the bus industry is very costly.

But that should not deter bus owners to regularly modernize and replace their transport fleet.

Because we cannot place a premium on passenger safety and security.

And I am sure that with proper operational planning, sustained investment, and more importantly by building customer trust and confidence, the industry will remain a profitable one and can continue to provide a satisfactory service to the commuters.

You may know that countries such as Singapore and Hong Kong are known for their excellent transport systems.

And a key feature of their transport networks is that they integrate multiple technologies such as metro rail, light rail, bus rapid transit as well as basic bus services.

A common ticket or fare card services serves all the systems, making it easy for commuters to transfer from one mode to the other.

Passenger information systems also enable users to know when the next service is due and to understand the routes easily, and high frequency of service reduces the hassle of long waits at the bus station.

A good transport system has furthermore a positive impact on the productivity of the worker and on the competitiveness of the economy as a whole.

Ladies and Gentlemen

If we were to follow in the footsteps of Singapore, Hong Kong, and even South Korea, then it necessarily beholds our bus companies to reinvent themselves in terms of flexibility, reliability, safety and passenger comfort, which should be the key features of our buses nowadays.

Alongside, they should also offer customized services to meet the demands of all kinds of commuters including shuttle services, event organisers as well as travelers and tourists.
Monopoly of some bus companies in some routes should not be an excuse not to invest and improve.

When transport systems are efficient, they provide economic benefits both to the bus company and to the travelling passengers as well as the country.

As I said, the transport sector is an important component of the economy and a common tool for development.

To-day, I am given to understand that the bus industry is employing over 6,500 workers, quite apart from creating job opportunities in other related sectors.

Therefore, the economic and social benefits of the bus transport industry cannot be neglected.

I believe that the bus transport system has a future of its own.

It will not only survive any future developments in the transportation sector but be complementary to the system of public transport.

With these words, I wish to reiterate my thanks to the management of Rose Hill Transport.

I wish them success in their future endeavour.

I thank you for your attention.