Speech by His Excellency Mr Rajkeswur Purryag, GCSK, GOSK, President of the Republic of Mauritius, on the occasion of the launching of the biography of Mr Philip Ah-Chuen on Friday 19 December, 2014 at 17 30 hours at Audi Zentrum, Réduit.

Mr. Philip ah-Chuen
Members of the Ah-Chuen Family
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon!

Some nine months ago, when the project for the writing of his biography was on course, Mr Philip Ah-Chuen together with Mr Ibrahim Alladin, the author approached me for the launching of same.

I accepted not only because Philip Ah-Chuen is a well-known and successful businessman but also because I had discovered a year ago how committed and dedicated was Philip to the cause of education, his sense of patriotism, as well as his love for culture, peace and unity.

Indeed, in his capacity as past President of the Rotary Club of Port Louis and Project Coordinator, he had invited me to a Show in May 2013 at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute during which school children from different primary schools were given the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and patriotism through cultural sharing for peace and unity.

So, here am I, in your midst this afternoon to grace this special and unique occasion.

I must also congratulate Dr. Ibrahim Alladin for the excellent work he has done in producing such a well-researched book on Philip Ah-Chuen.

However, I have noted some slight errors in the book which I am sure Dr Alladin will address during future publications, as he has himself acknowledged.

I have already spoken to Dr Alladin thereon.

Although I have known Philip for a long time, I must admit that when I leafed through the pages of his biography, I found it insightful and of course, at times emotional too.

I read with passion and interest about Philip’s life, his family and the contribution he has made to our society.
The book also brings out an important aspect of our country, namely, the history of the Chinese community and the contribution the Chinese people have made, through their hard work and dedication, in order to build a better Mauritius.

Like the other diasporas, and the descendant of slaves the Chinese worked under extreme conditions to lay the foundations upon which our country is built.

Philip’s forefathers who came from remote China, toiled night and day, particularly in the family owned shop to bring up their children.

Their success is no doubt the result of their perseverance, commitment and, above all, the belief in building a life and future in Mauritius.

The Ah-Chuen family reminds us of our history as a nation.

They have left a legacy behind, and Philip is unmistakably a product of that legacy and he has proved it remarkably well.

In the biography of Philip Ah-Chuen, we can also read about the early history of Mauritius.

The book captures the essence of what was known in the good old days as “laboutik chinois”, and the relationship that developed between the Chinese and the people of Indian origin, especially, in the rural parts of Mauritius.

And here, let me stress that the shop or “laboutik chinois” has been an important milestone in the history of our country, especially in the rural areas.

We still recall the days when villagers would go to the Chinese shop down the road together with their red “carnet laboutik” to buy their weekly foodstuffs on credit.

Selling on unsecured credit was an instrument of mutual trust between the shopkeeper and the rural inhabitants, mostly of Indian origin.

The story of Ah Koon and Premlall is also a reminder of the life and hardship on the sugar plantations, but more importantly, of the sharing of a common destiny and heritage.

The story is full of emotion, and brings out a sense of compassion in the reader.

The book succeeds in re-living that historical past.

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

The Ah-Chuen family, like many others, occupies a unique and prominent position in our history.

That’s why, I would like to pay tribute and my humble respect to them.
The biography also depicts very elaborately the life and accomplishments of Philip Ah-Chuen, who is not only a prominent member of the Chinese community but also a great Mauritian.

Although he hails from a humble background, yet he has turned out to be a successful entrepreneur.

He has been able to stir his company and transform it into one of the leading firms in Mauritius.

Philip is also well known for his humanistic values and for treating his employees with respect and compassion, and the dignity they deserve.

On the other hand, Philip's entrepreneurial skills are brought to bear on a broad spectrum of domains as his initiatives responding to calls of all sorts cut across social classes, ethnic groups, professional and artistic fields.

Philip is no doubt a human being but with a big heart who believes in giving and sharing what he has.

His work with the “Maisons Familiales Rurales” may not be known to many, and yet due to his effort and initiatives, many young people in our country have obtained a second chance to build their lives.

Philip lost his father in October 1986.

That was the time when he realized the magnitude of the responsibility that would devolve on him as the eldest of the family.

His father's demise, no doubt, gave him a sense of power, but he also knew that he had to live up to his father's expectations, with humility and compassion.

That's how Philip emerged as the role model in the family.

The values he inherited from his mother were also critical in shaping his character.

As you would certainly know, the untimely death of his better half had almost devastated him and left him disheartened.

But he did not lose hope.

A single parent, he brought up his children in the most exemplary manner.

He lived the life of a father and a mother, making sure his three children got a good start in life.

Sandra, Lucilla and Jonathan are testimonies.

They absolutely adore their father.

I am sure they have yet to meet another caring person like him.
Philip, the single parent, understands the plight of single mothers and the challenges they face to bring up their children.

This sensibility prompted him to develop programs for women and single mothers that would uplift them and give them due recognition in life.

As he himself says, and I quote:

"I admire those women who work so hard to raise their children. Being a single parent challenges you to the limit and you appreciate your children better. It requires commitment, love and understanding. I did my best for my children, I could never replace their mother, but I made sure they did not lack love and kindness. I showed them the right path, and I am so proud of all of them.

Their mother is watching from somewhere and smiling. That means I did a good job". (Unquote)

I know for a fact that Philip is a devout Christian.

He attends church regularly and serves his parish in Moka.

In his younger days, he used to help late Father Souchon during mass.

Philip grew up in Port Louis.

He witnessed the growing inequalities of his time in the streets.

That’s what made him become a philanthropist, destined to serve those in dire need.

Of course, his father was his inspiration, and his mother inculcated in him values of an enlightened and responsible citizen.

A committed Rotarian, Philip has risen above the crowd and continues to serve selflessly and with devotion.

Simplicity, humility, responsibility, caring, generosity and discipline are signs of greatness.

Philip Ah-Chuen possesses all these attributes and that’s why he stands out.

He is the unsung hero, one who accomplishes things through conviction and high ethical principles.

His goal is a better society for every Mauritian.

He is not scared to say things crudely and as they stand.

“The truth has to be told” he says, and admires Mahatma Gandhi who said “only truth can prevail”.

His vision is for the creation of a modern meritocratic and peaceful society where every citizen can live in harmony.
Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we launch this biography of Philip Ah-Chuen to-day, let me take the opportunity not only to thank the Ah-Chuen family, but also to wish Philip a “Happy Birthday”.

This is a joyous occasion and he thoroughly deserves to be recognized.

Philip, I wish you well in your future endeavour and hope that you will continue to serve our country with the same zeal and enthusiasm and continue to remain a model for the younger generations.

With these words, I would like to wish you all a Merry X-Mas and a Happy New Year 2015 which I hope will bring you joy and prosperity in your life.

It’s my pleasure now to launch this biography “Philip Ah-Chuen – Entrepreneur, Philanthropist, Educator” which I commend to all our readers

I thank you for your attention.