



SPEECH

**His Excellency Mr Dharambeer Gokhool G.C.S.K.,
President of the Republic of Mauritius**

**EVENT: Launch of the Digital Transformation
Blueprint: 2025-2029**

**VENUE: Sir Harilall Vaghjee Hall,
New Government Centre, Port Louis**

DATE: 26 May 2025

Protocol

Honourable Mrs Shirin Aumeeruddy-Cziffra, Speaker of the National Assembly

Dr the Honourable Avinash Ramtohul, Minister of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation

Honourable Ministers and Junior Ministers

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Media

All Protocol Observed

1. Introduction

On Friday 22 May 2025, I attended the 6th InnovationMauritius.com Conference on the theme: AI Evolved - Navigating the Shift from Generative to Agentic AI - Its Impact on the Workforce and the Workplace as Chief Guest and delivered the keynote address.

As it was a Friday when Cabinet meets, the Hon' Minister of IT, Communication and Innovation was present in the evening and spoke about the AI Policy framework for Mauritius.

If you check the internet for AI events happening online or in-person, irrespective of time zones, you are likely to come across a couple or more AI events happening at the time you are online.

2. **A defining moment**

This evening's event, therefore, puts Mauritius on the global calendar of AI events and sends a very strong signal that digital transformation is on the move in the Republic of Mauritius.

The launch of this Digital Transformation Blueprint 2025-2029 is a defining moment in the history of our Republic—

a moment that sets the tone for the future we seek to build: inclusive, innovative, resilient, environmentally sustainable and distinctly Mauritian.

It is a bold expression of our national resolve to position Mauritius at the forefront of the digital age, to empower our people with opportunity, and to reinforce trust in a transparent, data-driven, and citizen-centric AI governance model.

3. **The context for Digital Transformation**

Let me provide you with a context and backdrop for this digital transformation imperative.

11th November 2024- people voted for change.

The new Government undertook a situational analysis and produced The State of the Economy document.

In and outside the National Assembly, in print and on social media, in evidenced-based reports by international organizations, there were clear

and unequivocal indications of the deplorable state of the economy and governance.

The challenge was formidable, but the determination of the new Government was undaunted. The country had to be saved for the present and future generations.

On Friday 24 January 2025, Government unveiled its vision and mission in its Government Programme 2025-2029 - A Bridge to the Future.

I had the honour and privilege to present the Government programme to the nation and to the world.

We announced and I quote:

This Programme lays the foundation of a BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE. The new model of development being proposed will be underpinned by innovation and creativity.

Work has already started on different fronts: economic, social, legal and environmental.

With this Blueprint, Government is unveiling its digital transformation vision and mission for a Hi-Tech Intelligent Island,

A 360-degree digital transformation of public services, a robust national AI strategy, the implementation of a universal Mobile-ID, and the strengthening of our cybersecurity frameworks, amongst others.

This Blueprint arrives at a time when nations across the world are navigating the profound disruptions and opportunities of the Fifth Industrial Revolution.

Scope, scale, speed, significance, flexibility, adaptability, autonomy, all combine to trigger a major paradigm shift from human learning computing to Computers learning human behaviour!

Today, the world has reached an inflection point and we have entered an era, not just of smarter tools,

AI has emerged as a formidable technology available to mankind for the first time. Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing, agentic AI, blockchain, and immersive technologies are reshaping how we live, learn, work, and govern.

The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the transformative power of digital systems and our strengths and limitations.

We have the foundations, but we must consolidate it.

The crisis also magnified digital divides—between those with access and those without; between those with IT skills and those without.

Wisdom teaches us not to repeat past mistakes-but to learn from them and to move on. In this context, Mauritius must not merely adapt-we must innovate and lead.

4. Blueprint, Pillars and Enablers

This Blueprint builds upon and operationalizes the vision and mission of Government. It is structured around **four strategic pillars** and supported by **five enabling frameworks** and is anchored in **three key principles**.

*The first pillar, **Digital Bridge to the future**, aims to modernize public service delivery through unified data centres powered by technologies such as Mobile ID and digital documents.*

*The second pillar, **Human Capital- Digital Skills for All**, focuses on equipping all citizens with the tools and training to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.*

*The third pillar, **Economy- Innovation and Private Sector Growth**, supports entrepreneurship, startup ecosystems, and Public-Private-People partnerships to unlock innovation.*

*The fourth pillar, **Planet- A Sustainable and Resilient Digital future**, promotes climate-conscious technologies and eco-friendly digital practices.*

These pillars are supported by enablers that will drive successful implementation: robust digital infrastructure, modern legal frameworks, effective institutional governance, cybersecurity and trust, and a national data strategy powered by artificial intelligence and analytics. Together, they form the backbone of a trustworthy and secure digital transformation.

The three key principles are:

- **Digital Equity:** Ensuring that every citizen, regardless of location or background, can access and benefit from AI technologies.
- **Human-Centricity:** Placing people, ethics, and societal wellbeing at the centre of innovation.
- **Environmental Responsibility:** Recognising our duty to future generations by making sustainability a core tenet of technological progress.

Together, they articulate a vision for a **Hi-Tech Intelligent Island-** a Mauritius that is interconnected, inclusive, innovative, and sustainable.

5. CHALLENGES: Ethics, Privacy, and Digital Rights

As we move forward in our digital transformational journey, we shall have to deal with a number of challenges.

It is believed that by embracing technology and investing in our human capital, we can unlock our full potential and achieve our aspirations for a prosperous and equitable society.

AI is already having a pervasive impact in all sectors of the economy and society from healthcare, education, construction, manufacturing, agriculture, law engineering, and environment to governance. The list is not exhaustive.

I note with pleasure and satisfaction that the Private sector-Business Mauritius, Association of Mauritian Manufacturers, SMEs, the MTPA and the Global Business sector are all gearing up to take digitalization to the next level.

AI's influence is simply ubiquitous and there is broad agreement about its potential to fuel economic growth, foster innovation, encourage entrepreneurship, and empower our people to thrive in the digital age.

It is believed that by embracing technology and investing in our human capital, we can unlock our full potential and achieve our aspirations for a prosperous and equitable society.

However, we need to reckon that the impact of technology on work, worker and the work organization has always preoccupied the minds of policy makers and practitioners and other stakeholders like workers' unions.

Throughout the preceding industrial revolutions, while technology has contributed towards economic efficiency and prosperity, it has also been accompanied by some unintended (in some cases intended) consequences

—socially, psychologically and environmentally. Automation may disrupt traditional jobs.

One of the most daunting challenges in technological transformation will be **resistance to change**, especially among the older generations.

In the Public sector, less so in the private and business sector, if we do not secure the ownership of Senior Management, I am afraid we shall not be able to make much progress.

Their engagement cannot be optional; it will have to be mandatory.

There are many change management models that can help but I would recommend the Bridges' Transition Model which takes into consideration the significant emotional upheaval that employees face as they grapple with the loss of the familiar and the fear of the future.

This model of three stages: Let go, Experiment and Experience and Embrace.

Government must consider setting up a Digital Transformation Bureau and also enlist the services of Digital Transformation officers to drive the transformation.

Also, as we embrace the digital world, we must also **defend the rights** of every digital citizen.

Cyber threats will increase. Misinformation will challenge social cohesion.

But our response must be guided by:

Foresight, vigilance, and adaptation. This requires strong data governance, continuous public education, ethical AI frameworks, and investments in resilience and cyber defense.

We will have to enshrine **digital privacy, freedom of expression, and data protection** as core pillars of our democracy.

Our legal reforms will have to be grounded in **human rights by design** principles.

Digital surveillance must never be used to erode civil liberties. Consent must be informed, revocable, and respected.

Children must be protected from online harms. Algorithms must be auditable and explainable.

In this, we will have to engage civil society, academia, and independent regulators—not as afterthoughts, but as essential partners in digital governance.

Digital geopolitics is reshaping international relations. Countries are competing not just for markets, but for **data sovereignty, AI leadership, and tech alliances**.

Mauritius must position itself strategically as a **neutral, ethical, and forward-looking digital hub** in the Indian Ocean.

We will need to strengthen ties with the **African Union, Commonwealth, UN bodies, and Indo-Pacific partners** to co-create digital standards, collaborate on cybersecurity, and participate in global tech governance.

We will also have to amplify the voice of **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** in international forums- advocating for **equitable digital financing**, climate tech access, and responsible AI deployment.

Mauritius may be small in size-but we can be **mighty in influence**. Digital transformation will require leadership-across government, private sector, academia, and civil society.

6. A National Call to Action

This Blueprint does not end in 2029.

It lays the foundation for decades to come.

My message:

- To our **young people**: you are the architects of this digital future. Embrace it. Shape it. Challenge it.
- To our **educators**: integrate digital skills not just in curricula, but in classroom culture. Teach our students to be critical thinkers, responsible netizens, and confident problem-solvers.
- To our **public servants**: reimagine your role. You are no longer gatekeepers, you are enablers of service, transparency, and trust.
- To our **private sector**: invest in innovation. Mentor startups. Partner with government. Digital transformation is not just a national agenda— it is a business opportunity.
- To our **diaspora**: Mauritius welcomes your return—physically or virtually. Your expertise, networks, and insights are invaluable.
- To our **development partners** and the international community: Mauritius is open to collaboration, investment, and knowledge exchange. Help us build bridges, not walls.
- And to **every citizen**: be part of this change. Whether it's learning a new digital skill, reporting cybercrime, using e-services, or helping a neighbour navigate the digital world—your contribution matters.

Let us move together **as one people, as one nation** in this defining moment.

After 60 years, on 22nd May 2025, we were able to clinch a deal with two superpowers for our full and final sovereignty on the Chagos Archipelago through the deployment of Soft Power Diplomacy,

So we have the potential, we have the capabilities, and we are talented.

We must now win the battle of digital transformation.

7. Conclusion: The Future Is Ours to Create

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the Republic, I reaffirm my full support to this initiative. I congratulate the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation for its visionary leadership and for crafting a plan that is not just strategic, but also compassionate and inclusive.

This **Digital Transformation Blueprint 2025–2030** is not just a policy document-it is a national **social contract**, a moral **commitment**, and a strategic **investment**.

We pledge to build a Mauritius where **technology empowers, not divides**; where **every citizen is connected**, every **voice is heard**, and every **dream has a digital path**.

Let this be our legacy: that in an age of automation, we chose **ethics**; that in an era of disruption, we chose **inclusion**; and that in a time of rapid change, we chose **human dignity and planetary care** as our compass.

As President of the Republic, I again pledge my full support for this vision. Let us now move forward—**boldly, resiliently, and fearlessly**—into this new era.

The future is not something we await. It is something we create.

I want to end on a personal note.

Avinash Ramtohul was my student. Today he is a Minister. He was one of the brilliant minds of his batch. This Blueprint is a living testimony of his potential and his competence.

As President of the Republic, I cannot but wish him and his team bon courage et plein de success.

Thank you.

Vive la République de Maurice. Vive notre avenir numérique.