



SPEECH

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

**EVENT: LAUNCH OF ANNUAL MAGAZINE -
ASSOCIATION OF HUMAN RESOURCE
PROFESSIONALS MAURITIUS**

VENUE: NAMASTE RESTAURANT, CAUDAN

DATE: 19 DECEMBER 2025

TIME: 19:00 HOURS

Protocol

Mr. Areff Salauroo, President of the International Confederation of Human Resource Associations and National President, Association of Human Resource Professionals of Mauritius;

Members of the MAHRP

CEOs, HR Managers and Executives from all sectors of our Economy,

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Introduction

Good evening.

Thank you for inviting me to the launch of the Association of Human Resource Professionals of Mauritius' annual magazine 2025, focusing on HR Trends 2026, the emergence of the digital workplace and their implications for HR professionals.

A publication that reflects the continuing strategic importance of human resources and the need to integrate Artificial intelligence and Human ingenuity - as argued by Dave Ulrich-in order to deliver values to both shareholders and stakeholders.

I thank the President for forwarding an advance copy of the magazine.

Annual Magazine 2025

I went through the contents section and had time to read a few of the articles.

I found it very stimulating, eye-opening and enriching. I assure you that I shall find time to read all the articles.

I must say that the Magazine provides valuable insights on the changing roles responsibilities, challenges and priorities of HR professionals in increasingly being shaped by AI, changing demographics and life styles.

Reliving the 2005-2010 situation

I say this because, as President, I am reliving a situation that I went through when I had to assume ministerial responsibility between 2005 and 2010.

I distanced myself from the academic world to concentrate on my ministerial duties.

And since December 2024, I am busy attending to my Presidential duties.

So I have not been able to be in touch with the latest trends and developments in the field HR.

I must confess that I do miss the world of academia, and my regular contacts with students and professionals in HR, **which helped to sharpen and deepen domain, disciplinary or subject knowledge.**

So I try to take advantage of opportunities that come in my way as President of the Republic to reconnect and keep in touch with developments in the field of HR.

For two reasons:

First, out of natural curiosity to know and to keep in touch with developments, as many professionals do, in a discipline in which I have evolved for many years.

The second reason has to do with what is called in French “la deformation professionnelle”-

La déformation professionnelle est une tendance psychologique où une personne applique inconsciemment les schémas de pensée, de langage ou de comportement appris dans son métier à sa vie privée

HR professionals are very fond of the concept of “Employability”- which implies to keep updating your skills so that you do not lose your market value.

The only option to lifelong learning is obsolescence and oblivion.

In a particularly highly volatile labour market, labour or worker mobility-changing jobs or even careers-is now a common feature.

And employability-looking for alternative job opportunities-is becoming a norm and is the only way to extend one’s professional shelf-life.

And since political positions, as in my case, do not guarantee job security, there is probably a subconscious desire in me to nurture my employability potential.

Let me substantiate with a real life, concrete example to illustrate my point:

President Abdul Kalam was a renowned scientist, scholar and academic. He served as President of India. But when he retired, he went back to lecture.

I am a great admirer of President Kalam and I do not mind following his example, when the time comes.

Hence the second reason why I must thank you for giving this opportunity to be in your midst. To reconnect with developments in the field of HR.

And take stock of the major trends in the field of HR and the ubiquitous influence of AI is wielding on the HR discipline.

Crossroads and VUCA

Allow me, therefore, to commend the MAHRP, in particular Mr. Areff Salauroo, and all members, for this opportunity and for your unwavering commitment to advancing the profession and promoting excellence in human capital management.

As we are aware, HR professionals today stand at a pivotal crossroads.

We are living through an era in which constant change has become the new normal as we adopt the post-Covid paradigm. We are living in a VUCA world.

Traditional certainties have dissolved. Hierarchies are flattening. Careers are fragmenting and recomposing, and technology is accelerating faster than we can respond.

Against this backdrop, the question before us, as explored in this magazine, is not whether change will continue, but whether our leadership, and particularly our HR leadership, is ready to embrace and lead it.

As you are aware and as argued by Dave Ulrich, traditional and rudimentary roles of HR managers have now been upended, and HR has moved from being a purely an administrative function to becoming a strategic business partner.

This transformational model of HR is being reshaped by AI.

HR Trends 2026

There is no doubt that one of the most defining HR trends for 2026 - and perhaps the most fascinating - is the strategic harnessing of Artificial Intelligence.

AI is transforming recruitment, workforce planning, learning systems, performance management, and employee engagement.

However, a widening gap persists between AI ambition and HR readiness.

Organisations speak the language of transformation, yet their people systems, skills frameworks, and leadership mindsets often remain anchored in yesterday's models.

It must be clearly stated: AI is no longer an optional efficiency tool but a baseline competency and a national imperative.

Our progress as a nation will depend upon the creativity, commitment and productivity of our people. Flexibility, sustained quality will be the defining criteria for enhanced value and competitive advantage.

So, AI cannot simply be bolted onto outdated structures.

This transformation necessitates a move towards skills-based organisations, where value derives from adaptable skill portfolios that evolve with organisational needs.

Importantly, this shift does not diminish human judgment but emphasises the importance of critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical decision-making: qualities that technology cannot replace.

This is brought out very forcefully in Dave Ulrich's at Page 14 of the magazine where he states and I quote:

As Business and HR leaders use AI to deliver talent, incorporating human ingenuity-the ability to creatively solve problems with imagination, adaptability, judgement, and empathy-remains and becomes even more critical.

Hence, his proposal for complementarity and seamless integration between AI and HI resulting in Talent Advantage for organisations.

Talent Advantage = AI (Artificial Intelligence * HI (Human Ingenuity)

This formula emphasizes that AI and HI are a multiplier, not an additive sum. The implication is that without either component, the overall talent potential is severely limited.

If properly handled, HR professionals can leverage the power and the potential of AI for Talent optimization.

Generational Change and Convergence

In parallel, we are also witnessing a demographic transition within our organisations:

- Baby Boomers are retiring, taking decades of experience with them.
- Generation X is assuming top leadership roles, acting as a bridge between tradition and transformation.
- And now, Gen Z is entering the workforce with native fluency in AI, digital tools, and social media, bringing new expectations, working styles, and redefining notions of purpose and efficiency.

When unmanaged, this convergence generates tension: resistance to technology at senior levels, impatience with hierarchy at junior levels, and uncertainty in the middle.

Role of HR and Leadership

HR professionals are uniquely positioned to address these challenges.

Through inclusive leadership development and inter-generational dialogue, they have the daunting yet crucial task of transforming conflict into strength by creating a coherent and supportive culture.

In this new environment, HR must thus be digitally literate, legally and ethically aware, and profoundly human.

As we advance deeper into the age of AI, the value of Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence, and Spiritual Intelligence also becomes ever more pronounced.

The risks of an “always-on” culture are increasingly evident:

Burnout, disengagement, and mental health challenges are rising among both employees and HR professionals.

Progressive practices now incorporate well-being metrics, employee feedback, and policies such as the right to disconnect.

This reality demands a re-imagination of leadership into one that balances compassion, care, and humanity alongside performance, innovation, and productivity, for all, including HR professionals themselves.

Technological developments have provided us with Thinking AI which processes information; Feeling AI which simulates emotion, but true human-like consciousness, feelings, or self-awareness remains beyond the current state of AI.

AI can manage resources, but the management of human resources remains a primary responsibility of HR professionals.

Concluding remarks:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my conviction that systems succeed or fail according to the quality of their leadership and the values that underpin them.

And the future of HR will continue to be shaped and influenced by Transformational leadership and a supportive people-centric culture.

As we look ahead to 2026 and beyond, we must remember that the future of work will not be shaped by technology alone, but by the choices we make as leaders and the values that we espouse.

It is our values, ethics, and commitment to people that will determine whether our digital transformation journey is inclusive, sustainable, and just.

And it is HR that must bridge ambition and readiness, and performance and well-being in our organisations.

I commend and congratulate the MAHRP once again for the publication of its annual magazine which provides important platform for dialogue and reflection about the future of the HR profession.

Let us move forward together, guided by our shared values and a collective sense of purpose - As One People, As One Nation.

I wish you all continued success, and a prosperous Year 2026.

Thank you for your attention.